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However, if you do want to edit or transfer a tape, you can do so on any existing VCR. The Kodavision system is completely compatible with both VHS and Beta systems.

All of which adds up to a video system that will spend its time collecting wonderful memories instead of dust. So why not visit your nearest dealer in Kodak video products and ask to experience the extraordinary new Kodavision series 2000 video system firsthand?

If you want truly enjoyable home video, you'll find the new Kodavision camcorder from Kodak matches what you're looking for.



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Channel One

Paying the Cable Bill

In the past year cable TV has taken its fair share of pounding in VIDEO Magazine. In April we published "Cable's Broken Promises," a piece which meticulously outlined how the industry has failed the consumer in almost every endeavor. Programming has been disappointing, signal delivery has been less than acceptable, commercials run rampant, and pay-per-view has become an unfortunate reality. Last month we brought you more bad news. While stereo TV has passed its nascency tests, the plain truth is that cable operators are all-but-ignorant about this new technology. It will be years before local cable companies are geared up to broadcast in stereo, and by the time that occurs, take a wild stab at who's going to pay the ticket for the privilege.

As we went to press, President Reagan signed into law wide-reaching legislation formally known as the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, also known as the "cable bill." The law, which had been laying around Congress for three years, threatens to pluck away the power that communities currently have over the way pay-TV is administered in their principalities. It took effect on December 29, 1984—yet it will take months, perhaps years, to assess its overall impact.

We at VIDEO think it's potentially bad. While a National Cable Television Association (NCTA) spokesman applauded the bill, saying it's "good news" for consumers, we feel otherwise. The association points to how cable franchises will now have more orderly renewal processes which "protect the assets" of the companies. Also, operators will get longterm federal protection thanks to a clause which guarantees a renewal appeal in court when they've been deemed to have done a "reasonable" job. The NCTA says, "The mayor ain't going to award the franchise to his nephew on a whim." That's true.

But more ominously, what if the mayor has already put his trust in an operator and has been unhappy after a long-range contract? The new law will make it more difficult for the town to replace the franchise. Cable companies can now seek relief in federal court over what is essentially a local issue. The NCTA says that the new law also means deregulation for virtually all cable services in the next two years, a move which will mean greater rate fluctuation. Will it mean cheaper monthly bills? We think not. The NCTA is pleased with the new law, a "victory" for the flagging cable industry. Its win probably will be your loss.

* * *

Another staunch critic of cable is Bob Brewin, a columnist for New York's weekly *The Village Voice*. Brewin takes over Bruce Apar's "Off the Air" column for the time being. The subject of his first piece? You guessed it. Cable TV.

* * *

The seven-day period between September 22 and 28 was the single biggest week in the history of video. All kinds of sales records were broken, according to the Electronic Industries Association, but one number was especially gratifying: 294,410 VCRs were sold, an all-time high. We'll let you know if it held up during this year's holiday buying frenzy.

* * *

Pioneer has introduced a nifty new product, the CLD-900, tested in this issue. It's a combination LaserDisc/Compact Disc player, a marvelous integration of two technologies. It's also a heavy, bulky affair, weighing around 35 pounds. It reminded us of Sony's first VCR. So when do you think the portable version will be out?

* * *

This year's "Best" series represents the editors' fifth annual choices among the top equipment, tapes, and discs released in 1984. It's often difficult to actually pinpoint when a product is officially given a birthdate: Companies announce products well before they introduce them—which is often well before they are shipped to dealers and available in stores. Call us crazy, but we've tried our very best to limit our 1984 awards to genuine 1984 programs and products.

—The Editors

video

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Q Why do I need Hi-Fi video tape?

A The critical demands of today's sophisticated and complex Hi-Fi VCRs require a video tape of equal sophistication. This video tape must be virtually free from dropouts and jitters, have unsurpassed particle density, and deliver unparalleled uniformity and stability in picture and sound quality. Additionally, the cassette transport mechanism must be unerringly precise to insure proper transferring of the Hi-Fi audio video, and control signals.

Q Why has TDK developed such a tape?

A As the world leader and innovator in home video tape, we knew it was our responsibility to develop the highest quality VHS and Beta video cassettes that would be completely compatible with any Hi-Fi VCRs. Just as we developed a video tape that made 8-hour VCRs a reality. And with almost 50 years of magnetic media technology behind us, we knew that we could develop a TDK Hi-Fi video tape that would

deliver the kind of high-quality performance that has become synonymous with our name.

Q How is TDK Hi-Fi Video Tape able to deliver such a critical performance?

A For a tape to deliver excellent audio/video reproduction, it must have—among other factors—excellent signal-to-noise ratios in both chrominance and luminance. TDK has accomplished this by developing new super-refined, Super Avilyn magnetic particles that are thinner, shorter and more uniform than any others currently available. This allows them to be packed more densely for improved audio/video performance.

Q Can you be more specific?

A Our technical specifications show the benefits: Video S/N +4.5dB, chroma +5dB, audio frequency response +2dB, and sensitivity +1dB, compared to our Standard Reference tape. All of this adds up to crystal clear, life-like color reproduction. And with an audio frequency response of 20-20,000 Hz, plus total harmonic distortion of under 0.3% at 7 kHz, you've got to see and hear TDK Hi-Fi on your new Hi-Fi VCR to believe it.

Q What else should I know?

A In addition, TDK developed a new high density/durability binder system which facilitates optimum particle dispersion and delivers the lowest dropout rate in its class. Our ultra-smooth/flat base film and high-conductivity back coating, in conjunction with our super-precision-made SQ shell mechanism (built to tolerances 2.5 times higher than industry standards), provide for the smoothest running performance of any video cassette designed for Hi-Fi VCRs.

Q Can I use TDK Hi-Fi tape for special digital sources?

A Yes. Because of its surface smoothness, superior signal-to-noise ratios and its low modulation level, combined with an ultra-low dropout count, TDK Hi-Fi is ideal for PCM digital recording. With TDK Hi-Fi's unique features, PCM recordings can achieve their full potential.

For the finest in Hi-Fi VCR and PCM enjoyment, there's no better video cassette than TDK Hi-Fi.

TDK
Don't just tape it. TDK it.

Fast Forward

Late-Breaking News

Gentlemen's Agreement

To rebate or not rebate? One answer comes from an unlikely corner of the nation—Wilkes County, North Carolina.

Jim Hickland and two partners opened a CED-only disc and player/sales and rental chain called Movie Time, just a few months before RCA announced it was ending CED manufacture. Hickland describes his average customers as working people who bought their CED players on credit and then rented movies from Movie Time. Such folks were less than amused by the player price-cutting which went on after RCA's announcement. "As one depressed soul put it, 'I bought my player two weeks ago for \$450 and now it's selling for \$230. Is that fair?'"

Most CED dealers (including Hickland's two partners) left the business, with RCA's economic help. But Hickland wanted more. He started making his feelings known, both to RCA and its regional distributor, Southern Radio Corporation. From the one Movie Time outlet that he owned himself, Hickland dug in his heels and kept insisting on serious compensation—both for himself and his customers.

An agreement was reached recently. While some details haven't been clarified yet, the arrangement clearly benefits Movie Time's customers. Those who want to keep their players—and surveys show that in general, most CED owners are still pleased with the format—have been given four free discs of their choice by Southern Radio as compensation for the

premium player price they paid. The minority who don't like their almost-new machines have returned them directly to RCA for a full refund—and a good deal on an RCA VHS VCR.

"People have said we did a better job of phasing down from the CED business than we did of gearing up for it," RCA Division V.P. Arnold Valencia says wryly. He calls RCA's generous response to Movie Time's customers an attempt "to do the right thing without becoming silly or extravagant." But he cautioned that the Movie Time specifics were not a reflection of national policy. "Our only policy on videodiscs, as with all our products, is to satisfy the customer. We're handling each case on an individual basis."

Southern Radio V.P. Rick Jamison was modest and cautious about his four-disc rebate program too. "We're primarily concerned with the customer," he says, "but four free discs isn't Southern Radio policy or RCA policy. It's justified here because Movie Time is going out of business. We didn't want to leave the customers high and dry." And they haven't.

Frankly, My Dear

Gone With the Wind, the 3-hour 37-minute, highly romanticized epic of life on an ante- and post-bellum slave plantation, will be available on cassette in March. CBS had exclusive TV rights to the film; according to an MGM/UA spokesman. The high cost of ransoming the film will make it a fairly expensive item. "We're not looking

at *Raiders* or *Flashdance* in terms of pricing."

182 Mile Island

The FCC recently declared a Syracuse TV station unfair to antinuke groups. WTVH had aired 182 minutes of spot ads advocating construction of a nuclear power plant, and only 22 minutes of ads against it. The station defended its unbalanced broadcasting by saying the nuke plant wasn't controversial; but a local peace group disagreed—and presented a petition from 20,000 local residents to prove its point. This is the first time in over five years that the FCC has ruled against a broadcaster in a fairness suit.

The Setting Sony

From Betamax to Trinitron to Walkman, Sony practically invented consumer electronics. But now, according to a recent *Wall Street Journal* interview with Sony's founder, consumers will be seeing less and less of the company.

Sony has been plagued by declining profits and stiff competition. Chairman Akio Morita told the *Journal* that the company's future lies in computers, telecommunication, air navigation, and broadcast electronics. "We won't be (primarily) a radio and tape-recorder company any more." Morita's remarks were actually an elaboration of indications he'd already given in VIDEO ("Present at the Creation," August 1984).

But for a company supposedly leaving the consumer field, Sony is planning an unusual number of new-tech con-

sumer products. Observers believe Sony will be selling its own 8mm camcorder (reportedly an ultralight weighing in at 3.75 pounds) here next spring; and Sony has just announced two new color monitors (13 and 20 inches), a digital scan converter which doubles apparent vertical resolution, and a large screen (26 inch) flat-screen TV.

Fightin' Words

A brawl was shaping up between cable companies and the makers of certain TVs and VCRs. At issue was the term "cable ready," and the cable industry wanted public clarification of the tuning capability built into video gear. "Cable compatible" is the new compromise term, and now consumers buying cable-ready—uh, -compatible TVs and VCRs will be warned that such sets can receive only unscrambled channels, and that "cable reception is only available to customers subscribing to cable service."

Tale of the Tapes

The quality grades on videocassette boxes are about as informative as alphabet soup, according to a leading consumer magazine. A recent *Consumer Reports* study rated 22 VHS tapes and found that the best of the test group was Scotch's "regular" grade—followed by a confused jumble of HGX, HG, and EHG cassettes. The report also found that the top 10 tapes it tested were very close in video quality but widely different in audio performance. (Our own tape tests, the most comprehensive and thorough available anywhere, begin in next month's VIDEO.)

ROBERT REDFORD

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Feedback

Readers Air Their Views

Guilt Complexity

There is something happening in the field of home video that needs to be addressed—now.

Being an avid video nut and also the publisher of a small monthly video magazine, I've probably noticed it more than others. It's the subtle feeling that certain individuals are trying to make home-video enthusiasts feel like crooks or cons or pirates. You hear about it almost every week when some film executive rants and raves about how home video is killing his industry, or how Congress is mulling over a bill to add a tax onto every videocassette and VCR sold in this country.

It's starting to get ridiculous. The other day I was in a video store when a customer came in wanting to buy a VCR. The salesman told him he got 12 free tape rentals with the purchase of the VCR. The customer was stunned—he asked the salesman how the store could do that. This guy was under the impression that renting videocassettes is akin to piracy! Now, this may be an extreme example, and the poor fellow may have been hopelessly misinformed—but the story is true, and it illustrates the current rumblings within the home-video hobby.

It's no secret that the film studios have made millions off videocassette-distribution agreements in the last year alone. In fact, several large home-video companies have paid millions for films not even made. One biggy that comes to mind is Media Home Entertainment, which

paid untold millions for the film *Santa Claus—The Movie* before shooting even began. It's positively amazing to me that any industry would try to get more money when it already can sell something not yet in existence for millions of dollars. There have even been some reports recently that more and more people prefer to buy their cassettes instead of renting. *Jane Fonda's Workout* and *Silkwood* did far better in sales than in rentals.

A concerted effort should be made to convince Congress and the film studios that 99.99 percent of us home-video nuts are not out to bankrupt Hollywood. I don't even believe much of a profit motive is involved: most video collectors just want to obtain certain films they hold dear. However, if idiotic taxes and royalties are ever imposed upon home-video equipment, incidences of illegal goings-on will greatly increase. People who feel they are being pushed around tend to push back.

R. Katerzynske, Publisher
Bob's VideoMania Magazine
Ripon, Wis.

I'm sick and tired of reading about the poor movie studios complaining that store rentals are making all the money on their films. They have only themselves to blame—they could put these films on videodisc a month or two before they put them on tape. They could also lower the prices of disc releases to make it worthwhile to own a LaserVision system. An LV

disc looks so much better than tape that it's not even in the same league—yet tape seems to be winning out. I guess quality doesn't mean much to people anymore.

Stephen Gerard
Douglaston, N.Y.

In defense of the institution of videotape, on which this magazine rests more than anything else, when's the last time you bought a videodisc player that records? Such a thing may be in development for consumer-level use, but remember that the movie studios would love us all to be using play-only devices, and only a videocassette recorder can perform the function of recording right now.

Making Waves

I am disturbed by the articles about so-called "microwave piracy" of Multipoint Distribution System and subscription-TV signals ["New Channels," "Fast Forward," November 1984]. As a person who does not have access either "legally" or "illegally" to these systems (I find movies on TV boring and don't watch them), I call your attention to the Federal Communications Commission's regulation on decoders for subscription television service, *Federal Register*, Vol. 48, No. 47, pp. 9864-7, March 9, 1983. The FCC does not believe its code and regulations can be used to regulate so-called "signal piracy."

Not only is that the case, but common law indicates that if the apples from the tree in your yard fall on my side of the fence, they become my apples. So, he who broadcasts signals of any sort should expect them to be

picked up by others. He should not threaten legal action against them when he has no legal claim to extort money from them. In addition, since the Supreme Court ruling in the Betamax Case, home taping of copyrighted material has been considered legal. It would then seem that home reception of such material is also legal for personal and private purposes.

There may also be a problem for the broadcasters if the public becomes alarmed about the possible medical effects of microwave signals. They may find that someone will sue or countersue over that matter.

Herbert J. Friedman
Washington, D.C.

My only comment to people like Ray Conley ["Pirate-busters," "New Channels," November 1984] is that if you don't want me to use your microwave signals, then keep them off my property, out of my home, and out of my body (yes—even my most private parts are violated!). By the way, Conley, I'm not so cheap with my own microwaves—you're welcome to stick your head in my oven anytime.

Mike McFarlane
Palmdale, Cal.

Man of the World

Once again you ignore the international perspective in your "Ultimate Systems" article (August 1984).

Now, for the worldwide-video connoisseur (there are a few of us out here), we start off with a VCR. The Hitachi

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—PRESENTS—

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Feedback


9900EM is an excellent multisystem VCR which allows for recording and playback in the PAL, SECAM, and NTSC standards as well as a few of their many variations. The JVC HR 7600MS is another good machine, though I find the Hitachi more versatile. For a Beta unit I'd have to go with Sony's SLT50ME as a deluxe unit which also provides playback in NTSC at the BII and BIII speeds, unlike the VHS versions which work only in NTSC and PAL at the standard (fastest) speeds.

For a viewing system I'd choose either the JVC AV 20ME or the Sony KX-20PSE, which handle most TV systems. Other models are available from a number of manufacturers like JVC, Sony, Sanyo, NEC, Sharp, Panasonic, or Barco. Another model I'd love to get is a Sony 27-inch Profeel multistandard monitor. You might also opt for a multistandard projection TV like Panasonic's TC 4000E (40 inches) or the NEC PJ-45 (45 inches) or PJ-60 (60 inches) NTSC/PAL projection units. Sony at one time made a larger unit, KP-7210PS, which was also NTSC/PAL/SECAM-compatible—but that was several years ago, so they probably have a much improved model now.

I'm still waiting for the ultimate deluxe multisystem VCR. The VHS unit would work in NTSC at the SP, LP, and SLP (EP) speeds, would have Dolby stereo as well as VHS Hi-Fi stereo, and would also work in PAL at the SP and LP speeds. A similar Beta unit would work in NTSC at the BI, BII, and BIII speeds (recording and playback), and would have Beta Hi-Fi to go along with the regular mono longitudinal audio track.

What amazes me most is that this equipment is available in most larger American cities, yet you never have done an article on precisely what is available, nor have you done a test report on any if it. Yet I have picked up several of my best European contacts from the pages of your magazine!

Douglas Orlowski
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Readers who are shocked and think us remiss in covering new gear should note that the writer is referring to industrial machines made for professional use. While such machines are available to consumers in limited quantities in some areas, they are not the kind of mass-market item that we cover. For that, read the video trade magazines. 

VIDEO welcomes your comments and questions. Due to the volume of mail we receive, however, it is not possible to send personal replies; please do not include self-addressed envelopes with letters. All letters published may be edited for clarity and space. Address correspondence to **Feedback, VIDEO Magazine, 460 West 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10001.**



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EXCALIBUR*	6021022	FUNNY GIRL	1511002	ANNIE*	1516052
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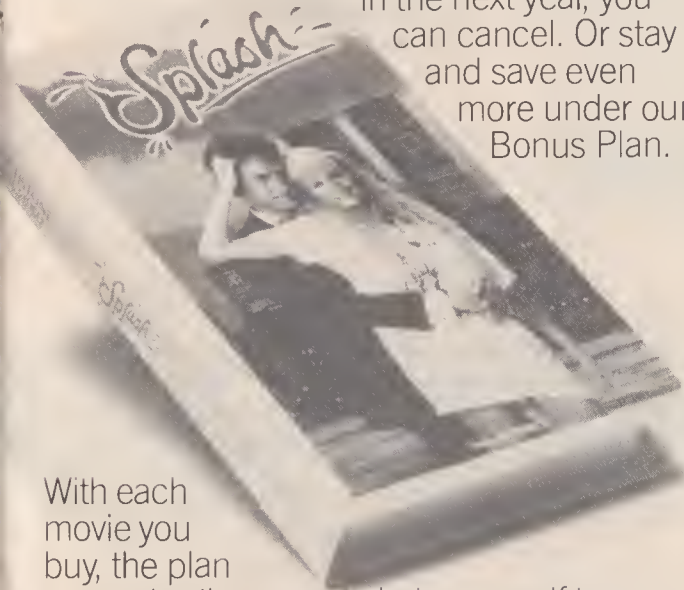
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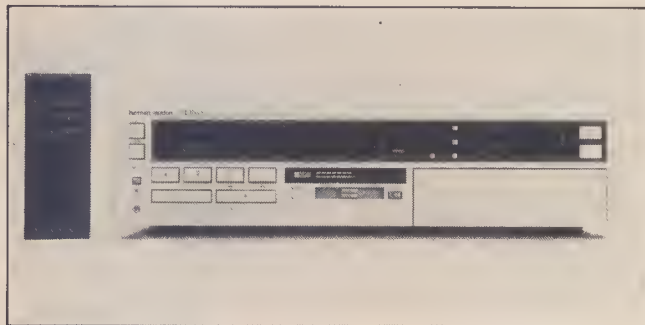
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New Products



Harmon/Kardon VCD-1000

Harmon/Kardon Hi-Fi VCR Is Broadcast-Stereo-Ready

Harmon/Kardon, a big name in audio, makes its debut in the video field with a VHS Hi-Fi recorder. The VCD-1000 is among the first VCRs released with built-in decoding circuitry for broadcast stereo TV reception, and contains special advanced circuitry to correct noise-reduction errors, high-frequency distortion, and bandwidth problems.

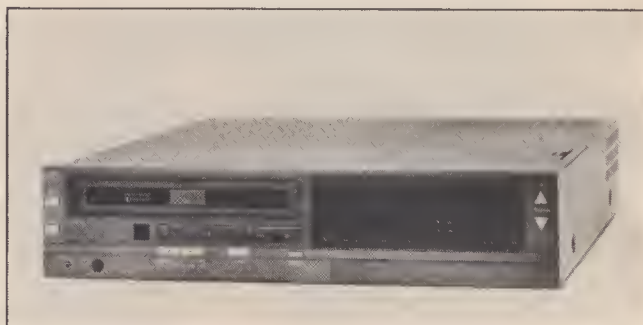
The 1000 records and plays back at all three VHS speeds, including the sometimes omitted middle LP speed. Its timer sets automatic recordings for up to four programs over 14 days, and the tuner is cable-ready for 105 channels. Some Hi-Fi VCR designers make the critical mistake of including only automatic audio-level setting during recording, but like the other better machines this one has both automatic and manual level setting. The wireless remote control duplicates all front-panel controls and has presets for 16 channels. It also offers half-speed slow-mo playback. The unit measures 4-5/16 inches high by 17-3/8 wide by 15-1/4 deep.

Price: \$1250.

For additional information,
circle No. 144 on Reader Service Card.

Sharp Hi-Fi Has Dolby, In Slimline Package

The Sharp VC-487U offers VHS Hi-Fi as well as Dolby stereo audio capability in an attractive slimline-designed package that's only 3-3/4 inches high. Its tuner is cable-compatible for 105 channels and its timer records a total of 5 events over 14 days. Other features include 14-function infrared wireless remote control, one-touch recording, 12 presets on the tuner, and stereo simulcast recording capability



Sharp VC-487U

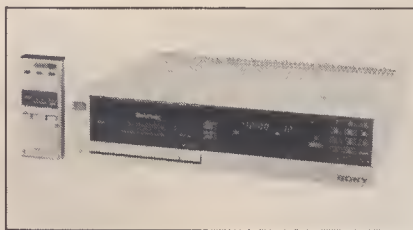
(though it does not have a built-in decoder for stereo broadcast TV).

Price \$1099.95.

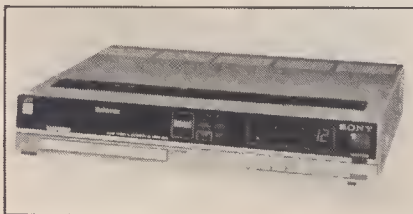
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Sony Cuts the Ribbon on Hi-Fi, Hi-Fi-Ready, E-Z Betas

Sony, which popularized the consumer-level videocassette recorder with its original Betamax, has slightly narrowed the dominant lead of VHS over the past year by capturing the consumer's imagination with the attention-getting new technologies of Beta Hi-Fi and Betamovie. The company has also watched



Sony SL-HFR90



Sony SL-HFR60

as one of its sister companies, Beta licensee Sanyo, has sold large numbers of VCRs with the lowest pricetags around—another factor in Beta's mild resurgence. Following up on these developments, Sony offers a half-dozen new VCRs that sport Hi-Fi, upgradability to Hi-Fi, and other features at moderate

prices.

The SL-HF500 is Sony's latest Beta Hi-Fi machine. Though it does not come with the decoder for stereo broadcast reception built in—as on machines by Mitsubishi and Harmon/Kardon—it has an MPX jack that allows connection of Sony's MLV-1100 multichannel TV sound adapter. The unit (in basic black) also functions with the Sony Unicommander remote control, which operates both Betamax and Trinitron TVs. Features include fast search at 15 times normal speed, plus ability to switch from fast forward or rewind (without picture) to visual search (with picture). Automatic capabilities include playback, stop, and rewind, and a quick-timer button permits automatic recording on one channel for up to five hours ahead.

There is more than one way to obtain Hi-Fi capability on Sony machines. For some time the company has offered machines that provide "Hi-Fi ready add-on capability," and two new ones in this genre are the SL-HFR90 and SL-HFR60. Combined with the Sony HFP-100 processor, which can be purchased later, they can be upgraded to full Hi-Fi performance. The 90 is cable-adaptable to tune in 169 nonscrambled cable and broadcast channels, while the 60 is good for 132 channels. The 90 also offers timer programmability of nine events over three weeks. Both provide visual search at 15 times normal speed, a quick-timer button to allow recording on one channel for up to five hours automatically (each press of the button adds 30 minutes of recording time), and "crystal clear" freeze frame with step-by-step frame advance.

Three new "E-Z Betas" bring desirable features at competitive prices. The

Simulated TV Picture



JVC'S LATEST BREAKTHROUGH IN VIDEO IS AUDIO.

Listen to this.

Introducing the Hi-Fi VHS system from JVC®—a video deck that not only gives you a picture of astounding clarity, but also sound of such high fidelity that it surpasses even the most advanced analog systems.

JVC set out to develop a revolutionary recording process that would give listeners the feeling of being in

signal is recorded on a shallower level. JVC's Hi-Fi VHS has a frequency response of 20-20,000 Hz and a dynamic range of more than 80 dB.

When played through your speakers, the resulting sound represents a true quantum leap in audio performance. It's a lot more than a VCR stereo system. It can actually enhance the quality of your current audio equipment.

The Hi-Fi VHS system is perhaps the most complete video deck JVC has ever made. Beyond the audio advances, its video capabilities are also highly evolved. You will enjoy time shift viewing, one touch immediate recording and a collection of special effects.

When you see it, you won't believe your ears.



a live performance. And do it without affecting picture quality.

We designed a way to record the audio portion deep into the tape's magnetic coating. Then, the video

Hi-Fi VISTAR VHS



JVC COMPANY OF AMERICA, Consumer Video Division, 41 Slater Drive, Elmwood Park, N.J. 07407 JVC CANADA LTD., Scarborough, Ont.

For additional information, circle No. 18 on Reader Service Card.

New Products

SL-90 includes 169-channel tuning, 21-day/9-event programmability, and wireless remote control. The SL-60's timer is good for seven days and six events, and tunes 132 nonscrambled channels. It also has frame-by-frame advance, slow motion, and wireless remote. Model SL-20 has the same timer capability and still comes with a wireless remote despite its place on the low end of the price range.

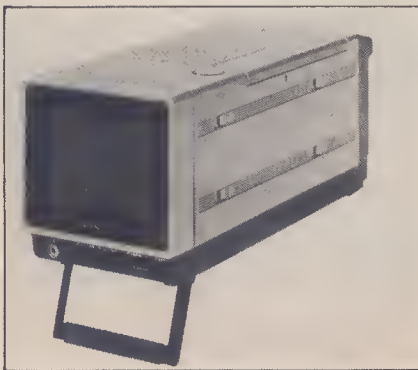
Prices: SL-HR500, \$850; SL-HFR90, \$800; SL-HFR60, \$700; SL-90, \$750; SL-60, \$650; SL-20, \$570.

For additional information,
circle No. 142 on Reader Service Card.

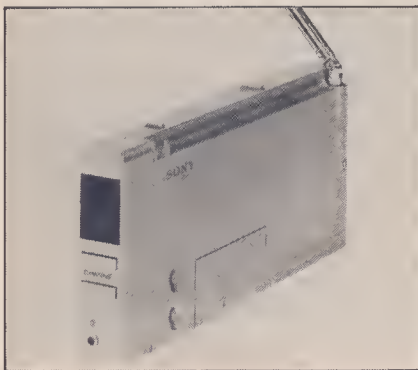
1 Color, 3 B&W Sony Minis Have 2- to 4-Inch Screens

Four new mini-TVs from Sony range in screen size from two to four inches, and one of them is a color monitor.

That's the 3.7-inch KX-4200 Profeel monitor, which also functions as a receiver when combined with the clip-on VTM-4200 portable Profeel tuner. The tuner has cable-compatible tuning for up to 22 preselected channels, with fully automatic channel presetting, and is powered by the monitor. It can even double as a tuner for a portable Betamax recording off-air signals away from home.

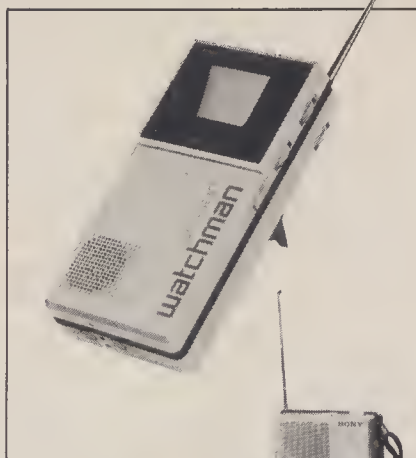


Sony KX-4200



Sony VTM-4200

The newest and biggest Watchman—reviewed in December's "Videotests"—is the four-inch black & white FD-40A. Using a larger version of Sony's two-inch Flat Display (FD) tube, it shifts the screen to the unit's bottom for greater stability and viewing ease. See the December "Videotest" for more details.



Sony FD-25A

Sony FD-40A

The FD-30A and FD-25A both have black & white two-inch screens. The 30A comes with FM stereo and AM radio receiving capability, while the 25A receives just AM. Both come with a built-in speaker but can also be used with optional Sony MDR-E152 headphones.

Prices: KX-4200 monitor, \$469.95; VTM-4200 tuner, \$149.95; FD-40A Watchman, \$199.95; FD-30A Watchman, \$279.95; FD-25A Watchman, \$229.95.

For additional information,
circle No. 141 on Reader Service Card.

Sony Adds Add-Ons: Stereo Receiver, Tuner, and Remote

Never caught napping when it comes to finding new ways (and gadgets) to improve the versatility and performance of its products, Sony has introduced a bevy of gizmos for owners of its Profeel component systems and Trinitron TVs.

The one most relevant for those looking to upgrade to stereo broadcast capability is the ISH-777 audio transmitting and receiving system. It is actually a small flat receiver that comes with a pair of headphones. The receiver is compatible for the Zenith/dbx TV broadcast system as well as FM stereo, for reception of simulcast programs. It operates up to 16 feet away from a Trinitron, and doubles as a complete remote-control system for Profeels and Trinitrons compatible with 10-key Express Commander remotes (this does not include units supplied with the RM-701 remote).

Functions include 10-key channel selection, channel up/down, channel enter, pay-TV Ant/Aux switch, MTS selector mode, and on-screen channel recall. To save power, the transmitter turns itself off five minutes after the TV shuts down and the receiver cuts power to the headphones after 60 minutes.

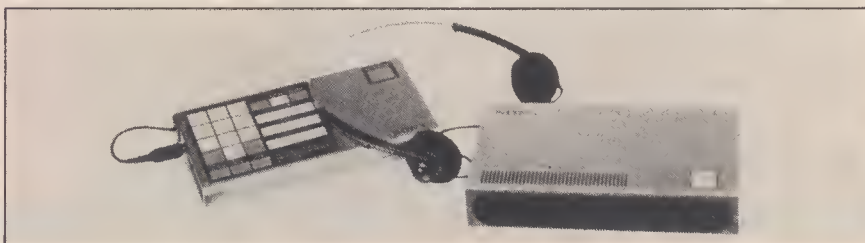
Also compatible with Profeels and Trinitrons (except those supplied with the RM-701) is the RM-767T, a state-of-the-art remote controller with built-in clock/timer. It includes features such as 10-key direct-access channel selection, channel up/down, channel enter, Ant/Aux switch, MTS mode selection, TV/video selector, and it has a full 360-degree command radius—meaning you can aim it in almost any direction and whatever command you select will get through to your TV or video system.

Yet another new Sony product, this one designed for Profeel component systems, is the VTX-1100R Profeel Access tuner. It offers cable-compatible channel reception, improved video and audio signal-processing circuitry, and a newly designed remote. It tunes a total of 181 channels and includes a pay-TV-compatible switch for access to a scrambled pay signal looped through a cable converter box; this feature does not sacrifice remote-control capability. The tuner is compatible with an optional Sony TXT-1000 teletext decoder, and improved audio processing will help with stereo broadcasts—though this unit is not fully stereo-ready. It does not have the decoder. But it does have circuitry for connection to an optional Sony MLV-1100 TV sound adapter, which includes the decoder for the Zenith/dbx stereo-broadcast standard recently approved by the FCC.

The 10-key wireless remote, with its slimline design, gives the user direct-access channel selection, up/down channel search, channel enter, on-screen display recall, pay-TV switch, power on/off, and other functions. Video and audio inputs and outputs make the unit compatible with Hi-Fi VCRs, home computers, video games, audio gear, and other video or audio signal sources.

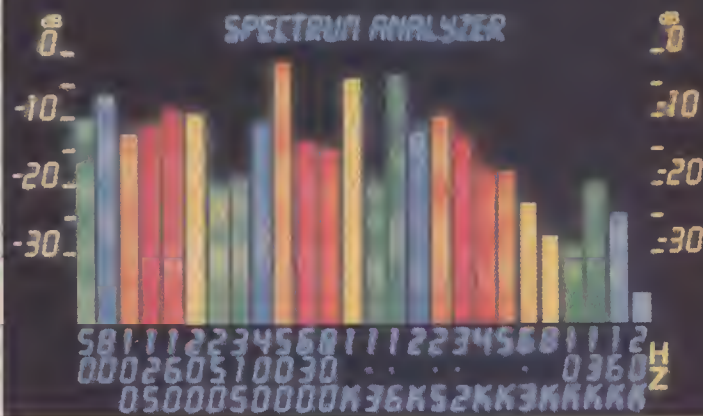
Prices: ISH-777 receiver and headphones, \$220; RM-767T remote controller, \$110.95; VTX-1100R tuner, \$449.95.

For additional information,
circle No. 140 on Reader Service Card.





Here you can see the superior sound of JVC's Hi-Fi VHS videotape.



The best-selling audio tape can't come close to the JVC videotape.

JVC INTRODUCES THE VIDEO TAPE THAT SOUNDS BETTER THAN ANY AUDIO TAPE.



JVC's Hi-Fi VHS videotape will make any VHS recorder a top performer, but the picture quality isn't the whole picture. When used on one of the new Hi-Fi video decks, it actually sounds better than any audio tape you can buy.

Utilizing new titanium oxide for the first time ever, JVC® engineered this tape especially for recording an audio signal deep within the magnetic coating. The result is sound reproduction of such high quality that it can significantly improve the sound quality of even the most advanced stereo system.



The small VHS cassette delivers large-scale quality.

SUPER HIGH GRADE COMPLETES THE PICTURE.

For perfect video quality, JVC's Super High

MAGNETIC TAPE DIVISION VHS

Grade videotape is what you should be looking at. It's the same tape we chose for our revolutionary TC-20 VHS-C cassette, used in our new ultra-light VideoMovie camcorder system. About the size of a deck of cards, this cassette delivers a level of quality way out of proportion to its size.

GET A BETTER LOOK.

JVC makes an entire line of high quality videotape for VHS recorders, from Standard Grade right on up to Hi-Fi VHS. And remember, they are the only videotapes that come to you direct from the original developers of the VHS format: the people at JVC.

JVC videotapes—the more you see them, the better they look. You can buy them singly, or in convenient six packs.



For 36 hours of recording time in the EP or SLP modes.



New Products

Citizen LCD Mini-TV Has 2.7-Inch B&W Screen

Joining the LCD little-TV race is Citizen, whose Pocket Television/AM Receiver sports a 2.7-inch black & white screen. The unit uses a "light reflecting system" to assure the brightest possible picture from its 18,056 picture elements or "pixels" (122 by 148), and the picture can be enhanced with an optional 90TA Electro-Luminescence Back Lighting Attachment. According to the maker, which otherwise specializes in watches, the picture can be viewed even under direct sunlight.



The TV section tunes VHS Channels 2 to 13 and UHF Channels 14 to 83. A 25mm speaker is built-in, though the Citizen also comes with an earphone. It can be powered by four AAA cells (which last about 10 hours per set) as well as AC current (using an adapter, included), car battery (BC-600 adapter optional), or battery pack (BN-600, optional). A video input terminal turns the unit into a mini-monitor for use in checking just-shot footage in the field, and it travels in a carrying pouch. The measurements are 0.93 inches high by 5.31 wide by 2.95 deep, and the Citizen weighs in at 8.84 ounces with batteries installed. The measurements include the VHF/UHF rod antenna, though a wire antenna is also included for situations when the rod antenna is not practical.

Price: \$199.95.

For additional information,
circle No. 139 on Reader Service Card.

Gem-Star Camera Switchers

Gemtronics makes Gem-Star camera switchers for two to four video cameras, using standard 10-pin camera cable connections. Operating on 12 volts DC and supplying power to the cameras, the switchers provide six selectable wipe patterns; slide "pots" (potentiometer controls) to handle wipes and dissolves, built-in black fade, horizontal and vertical split screens, corner inserts, dissolves, and takes between any two cameras. The two-camera model can be upgraded to three or four.



Prices: ranging from \$585 to \$970.

For additional information,
circle No. 138 on Reader Service Card.

Bush Cabinets House Video and Audio gear

An audio/video setup on the ascendant must eventually find a home, and it doesn't hurt if that home is an attractive one at a moderate price. Among the furniture in Bush Industries' Gallery Collection are two "home entertainment centers," the AV765 Video/Audio Center and the lower-profile AV755 TV/Audio Center. Both are styled in pecan and have enclosed space at the bottom for storing tapes, records, and accessories.

The 765 has twin glass doors enclosing three adjustable shelves, plus a pull-out shelf over the monitor/TV space that's good for a VCR, as pictured. The left-hand audio shelving can accommodate



Bush AV765



Bush AV755

units up to 19 inches in width. Overall measurements are 47 inches high by 48-1/4 wide by 17-3/4 deep.

The 755's one glass door has two adjustable interior shelves behind it, which again can hold audio components up to 19 inches wide. Like the 765, it can accommodate standard or component TV units up to 27 inches wide and 19 inches high.

Prices: AV765, \$329.95; AV755, \$279.95.

For additional information,
circle No. 137 on Reader Service Card.

Bib Bags Tote Video With a 'High Tech Sheen'

Five new VCR and camera bags from Bib are all made of Tralex, a strong nylon fiber with what the company calls a "high tech sheen." Available in black, navy, or silver, they're lightweight, waterproof, and have outside velcro-fastened pockets to hold accessories. Carrying straps can be attached in more than one way:



the camera bags can be hand-carried or shoulder-carried, and the VCR bags can be toted over the shoulder, around the waist, or on the back.

The VE-100 VCR bag measures 9 by 11 by 3-1/4 inches and accommodates one-piece docking portables by Panasonic, RCA, Quasar, Magnavox, and others. The VE-101 measures 10 by 4 by 10 inches and accommodates a wide variety of portable VCRs by Panasonic (5500, 6400, 6500, 6600), Quasar (5400 series), Magnavox (8481, 8480, 8382), Canon, RCA (VJP 900), Hitachi (VT7P, VT3P), Olympus, General Electric, Philco, Sanyo, and Curtis Mathes. For older machines, check out the VE-102, which at 12 by 5 by 10-1/2 inches is the right size for older, larger portables by Panasonic, Quasar, Magnavox, RCA, and Hitachi.

The BE-150 Universal Camera Bag measures 14 by 10 by 8 inches and holds smaller video cameras, camcorders, and camera/recorder arrangements. The VE-151, on the other hand, is 17 by 10 by 9 inches and accommodates larger video cameras, camcorders, and camera/recorder combos.

Prices: ranging from \$89.95 to \$119.95.

For additional information,
circle No. 136 on Reader Service Card.

He's got the stuffing heroes are made of.



Walt Disney Home Video presents The Premiere Adventures of SuperTed, the animated video series about an ordinary Teddy Bear who was rescued from the rubbish and given magic powers. This ordinary Teddy Bear became...

SUPERTED! The super-powered teddy who can't bear crime. He and Spottyman, his friend from outer space, fly all over the world combatting evil.

PRESENTED BY

**WALT DISNEY
HOME VIDEO**

Already a favorite in England, SuperTed is a cartoon series made especially for young children. SuperTed began as a bedtime story, created by a daddy for his son who feared the dark. And so SuperTed was born, also a little afraid of the dark.

SuperTed may be a hero, but inside, he's just a cuddly kid. So remember: when you watch him at home, please leave a light on.

LIMITED TIME OFFER.
\$29.95*
ON VIDEOCASSETTE

Fine Tuning

Your Video Questions Answered

by Roderick Woodcock

Motor Mess

Q *I've got a Sony SL-5400 Beta VCR which has served me well over five years. Now it's developed an annoying noise whenever I thread the tape, which it does slowly. The fast-play switch isn't working either. I know I must take it into the shop, but I'd like to know beforehand what's wrong with it and how much it will cost to fix.*

*Doug Weitzman
Los Angeles, Cal.*

A I've encountered this problem before on both SL-5400 and SL-5600 Sonys. On these machines, the capstan motor also serves as the threading motor via a series of gears, belts, and levers which disengage once the tape is threaded. Since the capstan motor is an integral VCR part, driving the mechanism that controls the speed of the tape through the machine, it receives constant use. Yours has simply worn out, indicated by the low grinding noise that it now makes when you attempt to use the machine.

Occasionally these motors can be rejuvenated simply by oiling their bearings. Unfortunately this isn't an easy task since the motor is pretty much a sealed unit. If you have to replace it completely, a new motor will cost you anywhere from \$75 to \$90 depending on where you buy it. Installation is of course extra and probably will increase the cost of your service bill by another \$75 or so. Consequently, you're faced with the

prospect of paying about \$150 to fix a five-year-old VCR. I leave it to you to decide if it's worth it, given that brand-new Beta VCRs now sell for under \$350 in many areas, most of them offering comparable features to what you have on your SL-5400.

Of course, if you're handy with a screwdriver and soldering iron and don't mind purchasing a service manual for your Sony, you could just buy a new motor and replace it yourself. If you opt not to fix it, however, don't overlook the fact that someone else out there in videoland may place a different value on it. I'd try to sell it through the classifieds as a "fixer upper" that "needs some work." VCR ads like this are already beginning to appear. I've even seen some used VCRs show up at Sunday afternoon swap meets, which is probably the ultimate sign that home video has finally become a mass-market item like telephones, wicker baskets, and plastic coathangers.

Jack in the Box

Q *On the back of my Sony SL-2500 is a black panel secured in place with a single screw. I carefully removed the screw and removed the plate only to discover a neat black cavity about two inches deep along with a small plug that appears to go nowhere. Sony doesn't explain what this socket is for in the instruction manual. Can you explain its purpose?*

*Doug Hemphill
New York, N.Y.*

A The socket is for an optional VHF/UHF antenna booster. Although Sony sold it in Japan, it didn't feel this was a necessary accessory in the U.S. and thus didn't offer it here. On

the other hand, when Zenith was selling Beta VCRs built by Sony, it did carry the booster as part of its accessory line (part #800-979). It costs about \$30 and will fit both the Sony TT-2000 or TT-2005 tuner/timers, the Sony SL-2500, or the Zenith equivalents: the VR-9775 and VRT-9850 tuner/timer. To quote Zenith's service literature, "The use of this antenna booster is recommended only if the TV picture is snowy after the VCR has been installed. The booster may improve picture quality and eliminate the fuzzy reception from weak signals."

Hence, whether you need the device depends entirely on the quality of your off-air reception. If you've got a good over-the-air signal now, it won't be significantly improved by installing the booster. If you're on cable, you don't need it at all. On balance, then, few of the people who own these five models of VCR may need this product—bolstering Sony's decision not to sell this accessory. And while Zenith did stock it, it may not have sold many.

New Threads

Q *I've noticed that different makes of VHS recorder appear to work differently when they thread the tape. On some, like the RCAs, the picture blacks out as soon as you press Play and waits until the tape is threaded before displaying the picture. On others, like the JVCs, the picture on the VCR's tuner stays on the screen until the tape is threaded, when the tape picture takes over. I definitely prefer the JVC design since it saves me the nuisance of losing the picture for a few sec-*

onds while the tape threads. Why don't they all do this?

*Norman Wilson
Pasadena, Cal.*

A It's just a question of VCR design, Norm. While I agree with you that the JVC method of keeping the VCR's tuner picture on the screen as long as possible (even while the tape is threading) is preferable to the blackout method, the differences between the two are negligible. It's possible that VCRs using the blackout method need that time to allow the VCR to thread the tape properly and stabilize the audio and video signals coming off the tape, switching those outputs to the TV screen only when they're ready to be viewed. I haven't catalogued which makes of VCR use one design in favor of the other, but it is an interesting observation. But given the relatively short time it takes for the tape to thread, I can live with the blackout effect if the VCR has a significant number of other features which make it a worthwhile performer.

Inside Job

Q *Last summer you described some videotape rewinders that could also serve as tape erasers, just by running the tape past a magnet as the tape rewinds. Since the Beta format keeps the tape threaded around the video drum during the fast-forward and rewind modes, why couldn't they simply provide a switch that would let you turn on the erase head inside the VCR and do the same thing?*

*George Drake
Vancouver*

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Fine Tuning

A Another interesting idea! It could be done, but even if the feature were offered, it wouldn't offer the advantage that a separate outboard rewinder/eraser does—namely, that you can continue to use your VCR for recording and playback while the rewinder looks after the tapes. There's also the risk that if the feature malfunctioned or were accidentally turned on when you didn't want it, you could end up erasing an entire tape. Oops! Your idea would have one advantage, though. You could erase a tape in either direction, something that the Sony BE-V50 rewinder/eraser can't do (although I inadvertently reported in June 1984's "TV Den" that it could). It will only erase while rewinding. The VHS equivalent, made by Mitomo and Futek, on the other hand, can do both.

Change of Address

Q Most of the instructions packed with the various head-cleaning cassettes I've seen recommend that video heads should be cleaned every 30 to 40 hours. Isn't that a short time? I've had a VCR for several years now and haven't had to clean the heads once. Are these products necessary?

Hal Shields
Denver, Col.

A I've addressed the subject of head-cleaning cassettes before in this column, but this time I'm going to quote some statistics from authorized VCR service manuals to give readers a perspective on what manufacturers think.

Sony recommends that the first head-cleaning interval for Beta machines should occur when the first 500 hours has elapsed (SL-5000 manual) and every 500 hours thereafter. The same 500-hour intervals quoted in the service manual for the JVC-built Zenith VR-

4000. I suspect other manufacturers quote similar intervals for their VCRs. Panasonic includes the following quote in its instruction manuals: "The video heads of your VCR are extremely sensitive. Although hardly ever necessary, in the event video head cleaning must be performed, it is recommended that the cleaning be done by a qualified technician." A Hitachi manual states that in the event of an extremely snowy picture, "head cleaning requiring highly technical care is necessary...consult the nearest dealer or VTR Service Center for recommendations."

As for my recommendations, I've gone on record in previous columns as stating the case for the legitimate use of video head cleaners. In rare cases, they can serve a purpose. But their casual and over-zealous use by too many uninformed VCR owners is apparent given the amount of mail I receive on this subject. The welfare of these consumers or the longevity of the video heads in their VCRs is not well-served by companies who "recommend" head cleaning at intervals of 30 or 40 hours or less.

The bottom line here is who to believe, the VCR manufacturers—with all their sophisticated technology, research labs, and electronics expertise—or the multifarious merchants of head-cleaning cassettes, some of whom don't even manufacture the products themselves.

A Big Lug

Q I have a Panasonic PV-1770 VCR. When I use the search mode in reverse, the picture rolls vertically. In the forward mode it is OK. Since I don't have a vertical-hold control on my Panasonic TV, how can I correct this problem?

J. Kupfer
Whitestone, N.Y.

A In addition to the problem you're describing, another problem with some VCR/TV combinations is horizontal tearing of the picture during the forward or reverse search modes. While vertical and horizontal hold controls on your TV are the easiest way to control them, it's also possible to optimize the VCR's internal circuitry and/or tape-tension levels to stabilize the on-screen picture during the search modes. This second solution, however, will probably require an expensive service call from your local VCR technician since he'll have to come to your house to match up the two machines. You don't say what size set you have, but if it's a big 'un you probably won't want to lug it into the shop.

Drum Rap

Q I would like to inform your readers that not all Beta VCRs load the tape in the same way you have mentioned. I own a Sanyo VCR-4900 and when the tape is loaded, it is not wrapped around the drum automatically. Only when Play is pushed is the tape loaded. The rewind and fast-forward modes are done with the tape inside the cassette—like VHS. I think your readers would benefit from this information when choosing between Beta or VHS.

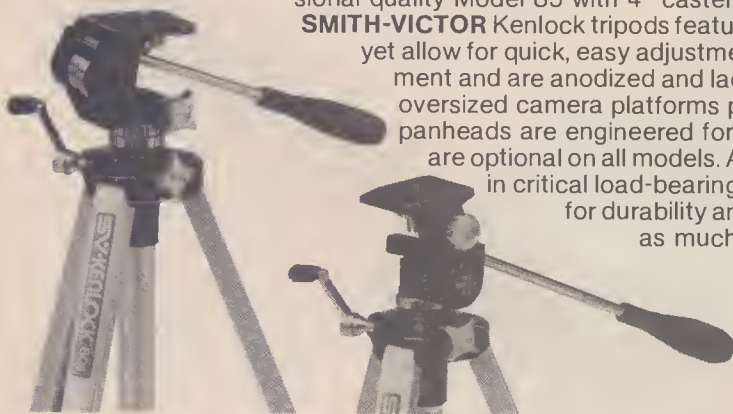
John Dorame
Chicago, Ill.

A I've already mentioned this difference in the tape-threading procedure found on some Beta VCRs in an earlier "Fine Tuning" column, John. Perhaps you missed it. The only machines affected are certain recent models manufactured by Sanyo and sold under the Sanyo, Sears, and Radio Shack brand names. All the machines made and sold by NEC, Sony, Aiwa, and Toshiba employ the conventional full-load Beta sys-

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Fine Tuning

tem. If a potential purchaser has doubts about the way a deck operates, it's easy to listen to the deck when stop or play is pressed. If the machine (such as Radio Shack's Model 20) has this design, the sound of the threading/unthreading operation can be heard, just as with VHS.

The method adopted by Sanyo isn't completely like VHS's. Although for the regular fast-forward and rewind modes the tape does go directly from one cassette reel to the other, and doesn't pass around the video heads, a small V-shaped loop of tape is pulled from the cassette so that the foil leader at the beginning and end of the tape will make contact with the sensor in the VCR to tell it when to stop winding tape. Note that not all the newer VCRs manufactured by Sanyo employ this system. The new slimline VCR-3, for example, also uses the full-load Beta system that originated with Sony's SL-2000 portable a couple of years ago.

Disc Risk

Q I really enjoyed your Fifth Anniversary issue (August 1984) and am looking forward to your fiftieth. Your informative features and columns help me and all your readers to keep up with the ever-changing video scene.

However, the August "TV Den" contained a potentially dangerous piece of information. You recommended that if someone should drop a videodisc and take a chunk out of the edge, it should be glued back in place with glue. Since LV discs spin at speeds up to 1800 rpm (600 to 1800 rpm in the CLV format) and generate a lot of centrifugal force, you can imagine what could happen inside the player if that glued on piece came loose while the player were operating. The damage to the player would certainly be more than the cost of replacing the disc in the first place. In fact, the instruction manual for my Pioneer LV-700 cautions against using damaged discs.

Other than this, your column was informative. May I add another disc defect to your list? I've found that discs that have been left in the player after use may "cup"—warping downward at the edges while the center stays at a higher level. This is probably caused by the heat the spindle of the motor generates near the center of the disc. Pressing the disc as you recommended will cure the problem, but simply removing the disc after playing it is a better preventive measure.

Tony J. Bandiera Jr.
Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

A A valuable letter, Tony, with lots of info I'm glad to pass along to our readers. Thanks for writing.

The Making of 'Killer'

Q I have a "Killer"—a gadget that eliminates color commercials from any black & white program. It works great as

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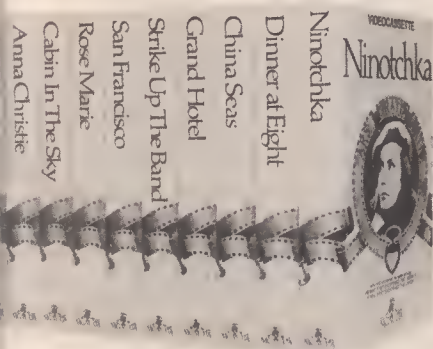
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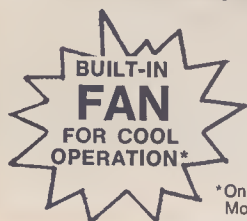
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Fine Tuning

long as I use it on my original RCA VHS VCR, which I bought back in 1978. However, it won't work at all on my newer RCA VFT-650 when the VCR is in timer mode. I can use it, though, to automatically pause my new VCR when dubbing tapes from my first machine. What's the problem?

Louis F. Campana
Williamsport, Pa

A As you suspect, many newer VCRs automatically lock out many of their functions in timer mode, including the remote pause socket. It's a logical development since the whole point of the timer is for the VCR to record programming when no one is around to push any other buttons. There are more sophisticated commercial cutters though, designed to work with both color and black & white programming. The newest is Vidicraft's CCU-120. It works only with VCRs that have cordless infrared remote controls and costs about \$400. (Call Vidicraft at 1-800-547-1491.)

Fade Away

Q I recently purchased my first VCR, a Toshiba Beta. I've been warned that to maintain the quality of any recordings I plan to keep permanently, it's necessary to fast-forward through the tape, then rewind it completely before playing it back, as well as to fast-forward and rewind each tape annually. I've been told that if I don't do this then "fade through" will occur, which causes a blending of pictures throughout the tape. I've also been told that I should purchase a tape rewinder because running all these tapes through a Beta VCR will cause the heads to wear out more quickly.

Tom Twinem
Brookfield, Wis.

A "Fade through," AKA "print through," is a risk with longterm storage of audio and videotapes. However, I haven't noticed any of the effects of signals from one layer of tape reaching down to scramble or interfere with those on the next level. After reading your letter I went into my library and looked at a tape recorded late in 1977. It still looked and sounded good, although I hadn't viewed it for several years. It was, incidentally, a BII tape made on a Sony SL-8200.

Limbering up the tapes in your library the way you suggest sounds like a good idea, but as their numbers increase you may find it impractical to do this regularly. Plus, as you point out, just running the tape back and forth through your VCR may subject it to more risks. A tape rewinder would solve half of that potential problem since you would then only have to fast-forward the tape in the VCR. If someone manufactured a bi-directional Beta winder (like the Mitomo VHS model I referred to in the June 1984 "TV Den"), you could maintain your

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tapes without the need for a VCR at all. But practically speaking, most of your fears are groundless and I wouldn't recommend you become that fastidious in your pursuit of the perfect storage conditions for videotape.

Rewinding Drag

Q *I've got a Taiwanese VHS tape re-winder which works well on Japanese-made tapes like Panasonic, JVC, Sony, and TDK but can't rewind American-made tapes. I've tried 10 Scotch VHS tapes and only one can be rewound by my re-winder. Is there a difference between American and Japanese tapes that causes them to behave differently in my re-winder? The store where I bought it refused to take it back because it does work on some tapes, though not on others.*

*Rebecca So
New Milford, Conn.*

A There are subtle brand-to-brand differences in the design and molding of the cassette shells used by different tape manufacturers, although it has nothing to do with U.S. vs. Japanese tapes. Of the four "Japanese" tapes you listed, for example, two—Sony and TDK—are actually manufactured in the U.S.: Sony in Dothan, Alabama and TDK in Peachtree, Georgia. I have noticed that the length and weight of a tape will cause

some VCRs and rewinders to labor when rewinding. A T-160, L-750, or L-830 is harder to rewind in some instances than an L-500 or T-120.

As for variations between different brands of T-120s most rewind problems could be attributed to differing amounts of downward pressure exerted on the reels by the metal leaf spring which straddles the top of both the takeup and supply reels. It's also possible that, in an inexpensive re-winder, the cassette reels are making contact with the bottom of the cassette shell rather than resting slightly above it, the way they would in a properly adjusted VCR—increasing the drag on the reels during rewind.

Most of these rewinders, while useful gadgets, aren't equipped with motors that can generate the same amount of winding torque that VCRs have.

Welcome to the Machine

Q *As a new owner of a Sylvania VCR, I would like to know how I can tape movies from my TV without the commercials to get a nearly uninterrupted recording without any missing parts, as when I stop recording, or a screeching noise when I resume taping. How do I erase a recorded tape? What buttons do I push?*

*A. White
Cathedral City, Cal.*

A Some regular readers may find these questions old-hat, but it doesn't hurt to re-examine some basic video concepts from time to time as a service to our many new readers.

To remove commercials from any broadcast you are recording, use the Pause control on the VCR. This keeps the machine in the recording mode while stopping the tape. When the commercial is over, press the Pause button again (JVC machines make you press the Play button instead) to resume taping. The reason you're missing parts of the program is that you're probably stopping the tape completely and then pressing Record again to resume. This procedure causes the tape to unthread, back up slightly, and then rethread in a different place.

You can do this more effectively by pressing Play and hitting Pause just before the end of the first segment. Then press the Record and Play buttons together. The "live" picture will then come onto your screen.

Every time you re-record something on a used tape, it's automatically erased by the VCR—making way for the new signal. If you want to erase a program completely, leaving no trace of any signal on the tape, about the easiest way is to tune your VCR to a channel that's unused (snowy screen) and record.



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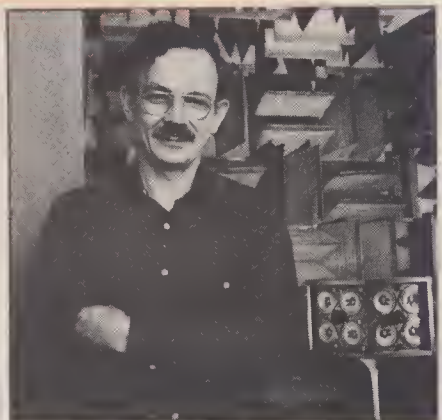
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Video Soundtracks.

New paths toward realism.
by William P. Schreiber

Manager of Home Products Engineering



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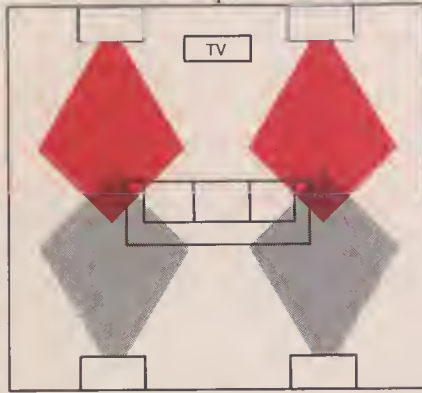
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Videogram

The Electronic Intelligencer

By Pat Wadsley

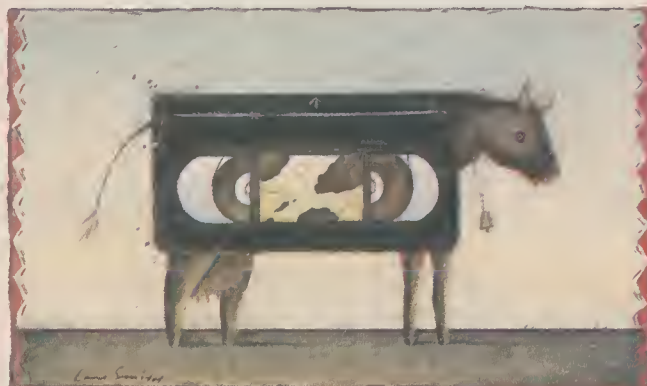
Electronic Bull

The old West ain't what is used to be. Since 1905 ranchers have brought their Herefords, Limousins, Charolais, Angus, and 18 other breeds of cattle to be paraded in front of buyers at the National Western Stock Show in Denver, Colorado. But this year the ranchers are leaving their cattle at home and showing buyers videotapes instead. The National Western Stock Show is having its first Video Bellring Sale, where buyers from all over the country and the world will bid on cattle they've viewed on video screens.

"In the sales pavilion, where the cattle used to be shown, we'll have two large video projection screens," says Barney Cosner, Administrative Assistant at the National Western Stock Show. "Buyers will see the cows in their natural surroundings—grazing, at the feed lot, out in pasture, and in lots of closeups. It's a new way of marketing."

The Western Stock Show decided to market cattle by video because Denver has become too populated to herd thousands of cattle through the streets. But when one head of cattle can be sold for anywhere from hundreds of dollars to one million (as High Voltage, a prize winning Angus stud was last year), buyers have shown some resistance to the fact that they're not getting a live show.

"Some buyers say they don't like it because they can't go up and poke the animal or see how much he



weighs," says James Odle of Odle Cumberlin, the auctioneers handling this show. "But that kind of complaint is just noise. I've seen buyers betting on cows' weights at other video auctions. If they've got good eyes they can tell."

Odle, who's researched video cattle marketing for Virginia State University, found that most complaints come from cattle middlemen. "These are the guys who used to make their money off ranchers who couldn't afford or didn't have access to the best markets," says Odle. "With video, the ranchers can sell their cattle anywhere and that cuts these middlemen off the gravy train."

Video cattle marketing may indeed give smaller ranchers a chance to expand into big business. But before they strike it rich, how will they afford cattle set designers and makeup men? And will Bob Giraldi direct?

Let There Be Light

If cattlemen think video livestock auctions are a bum steer, they may be placated by the latest advance in TV technology—*Rawhide*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Have Gun Will Travel* in color.

A Toronto-based company, Colorization Inc.—and the best-stocked TV and film stu-

dios in the country—are going full speed ahead to colorize the country's best-loved classic movies and TV shows. Besides the aforementioned Westerns, for instance, MGM is planning to color the original *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and *San Francisco* with Clark Gable. Projects which have already been completed for other companies are the original *Topper* movie, *Twilight Zone*, and *Laurel & Hardy*. *Topper* and 10 *Laurel & Hardy*s will be released on videocassette this year.

Colorization is a copyrighted process developed by Wilson Markle, owner of Colorization Inc., and done with computer. It involves first transferring film to tape, breaking down each frame into segments called pixels, and—with a light pen—painstakingly assigning each pixel a different hue. The number of colors which can be achieved is infinite.

"Colorization on *Topper* took 200,000 decisions," says Markle. "You have to color everything starting with the very first frame. Begin with hair and makeup, wardrobe, set design, the outside world. You put together a look, then change it over and over until you get it right. On *Twilight Zone*, which we also did, we

wanted garish color because it was a fantasy. On *Topper* the color is subtle. If you didn't know it was originally black & white, you'd swear it was made in color."

Twilight Zone's 25th Anniversary Special—"Miniature," starring Robert Duvall, aired recently. It was the story of a lonely man who fell in love with a doll, and Markle's company decided to leave most of the show black & white—but to heighten the fantasy aspect, colored the scenes in which Duvall enters the museum to see his almost living doll.

Since the response to that *Twilight Zone* episode was so positive, the companies involved intend to colorize *Sea Hunt*, many of the old comedy clips in the Roach library (like Harry Langdon, Zasu Pitts, Charlie Chase)—as well as public-domain films like *It's a Wonderful Life* with James Stewart, *Angel and the Badman* with John Wayne, and *Penny Serenade* with Cary Grant, aiming for re-release on cable networks, syndication, and ultimately release on videocassette. "We foresee colorization bringing a whole new audience to classic comedies," says Earl A. Glick, Chairman of Hal Roach Studios. "We'll put together stories and compilations using the vintage films and turn them into series. When each episode of a new series costs almost \$1 million to produce, and colorized compilations cost only about \$300,000, the advantage is obvious."

Beat Street

Nearly two years ago *The Compleat Beatles*, a full-length feature made especially for home video, established a new high standard for music programming—and a new

genre, the "rockumentary." Now, *Compleat Beatles* producers Patrick Montgomery and Pamela Page, who are film archivists as well, have assembled two more productions, *Rock and Roll: The Early Years* and *British Rock, The First Wave*, to bring us detailed and sometimes controversial cultural and social histories of different eras in rock.

"Some of the things we say are going to cause trouble," says Page gleefully in reference to *Rock and Roll: The Early Years*. "For instance, we state flatly that Elvis work was never as original or good after he came out of the Army. Elvis fans are not going to like that. We also make a direct link between the '50s payola scandal and the government's determined effort to stamp out rock & roll. That, we couldn't resist."

One of the producers' main objectives was a strong human-interest angle. They unearthed rock's roots through vintage footage of Chicago blues rent parties, Southern cotton plantations, and New Orleans jazz clubs and interwove those scenes with unique, rarely seen glimpses of the pioneers of rock. The callow Everlys try to hide their anger while TV host Julius La Rosa condescends. Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Lee Lewis explain to an interviewer that his career is still going strong despite his marrying his 13-year-old cousin. "It was hard to find clips of these people talking," says Page. "But we did want to give viewers a chance to see what they were really like."

Although *British Rock, The First Wave* was not completed at presstime, the filmmakers intend to detail the colonization of American

music through internationally acquired footage. *The Early Years* had enough rough tough and raw rock & roll to keep you dancing for the whole hour and—as Page and Montgomery detail the British musical Invasion—they intend to rely even more heavily on performance, from the beach-head established by the Beatles to the bombardment of the Who.

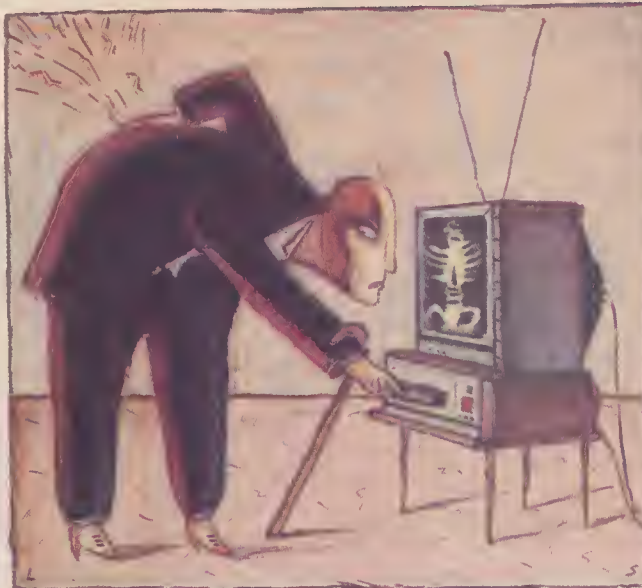
Chiropracticity

Some people think they're the most caring, thorough, and ethical practitioners around. Others think they're holistic health nuts. But there's a big media push underway to give chiropractic—the philosophy, science, and art of all things natural—a better position in the health-care marketplace.

Behind the push is Renaissance International which, besides holding 75 chiropractic seminars yearly, urges the use of videotapes as educational health-care devices. Many chiropractors have produced their own tapes, but Renaissance has produced a three-part big-budget number featuring scientists, chiropractors, and stars. Peter Graves, Tony Franciosa, and Lorne Green extoll the virtues of chiropractic: toxicologists and technicians explain the process—and it's all wrapped up in *Star Wars* graphics.

In the few years the tapes have been available, thousands have been sold—at several thousand dollars a piece. Chiropractors can't wait to set up their VCRs and spread the word. In case you didn't know, the word is this:

Health is achieved by the correction of "vertebral subluxation" (that's when your back's out of whack), and health can be achieved if you



Illustrations by Lane Smith

pay attention to sleep, exercise, nutrition, sound nervous system, and proper attitude. On the downside, chiropractors like Dr. Richard Raguso of Rye, New York believe that the human race could undo itself in the next 200 years through pollution, radioactive waste, and illnesses unless we start taking responsibility for our lives.

The tapes have been such

hot sellers that Renaissance can now fund a feature film. "We realize that nobody will go see a health-care movie. So it will be a theme movie, an entertainment film with things we want to get across in the background," says Roni Ziembra of Renaissance. "The main thing is that the level of success Renaissance experiences directly reflects the acceptance of chiropractic in society." ▣

Vidbits

At least one thing America has been able to export to Japan—MTV. Asahi Broadcasting Company has signed a multiyear agreement to air several hours—four, to start—of MTV programming in the late-night slot Saturday or Sunday. Programming will use U.S. VJs but the playlist will be slightly different according to what songs are being released concurrently in Japan. The programming will be in English with Japanese subtitles.

KLCS-TV's most popular program is called *TV Tutor*, a call in show which helps junior-high kids with their math and English homework. With the help of a Department of Education grant, KLCS hired tutors to take incoming calls before the hour-length 4:30 p.m. program and to help kids with their questions. The questions which come up repeatedly during the course of the night are then answered live on screen by one of two teachers.

Although KLCS gets about 100 calls a night, Media Service Coordinator Pat Marshall doesn't think it's really making a dent in the educational malaise yet. "The kids who call up are the kind who always do their homework," says Marshall. "We have to find a way to reach the kids who don't."

Speaking of education, what better place is there to bone up on such things as *The History of Broadway, 1984 in Review*, or *Craig Claiborne's Gourmet Cuisine* than the New York Times? These are the first three entries into home video by the Times' parent company. They're due out next year with such made-for-video tomes as a tour of *The Great Cities of Europe*, *Portraits of Power*, and more to follow. The Times Company productions rely on Times staffers and columnists as their human databases—and are already in demand in schools and libraries.

The Rolling Stones, 1967: rough, tough, and raw.

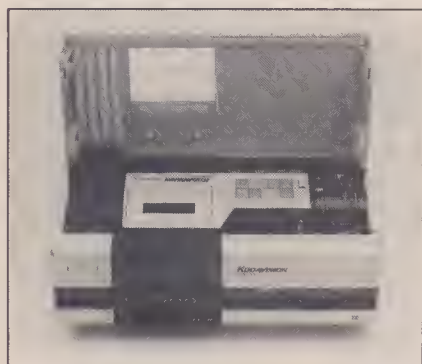


TV Den

Techniques and Technology

And Then There Was 8

by Roderick
Woodcock



Ten years ago, in 1975, Sony unveiled its first Betamax VCR, the LV-1901 console which combined a VCR with a 19-inch Trinitron TV. It was big, clunky, and expensive and wasn't an immediate success. Sony did much better later on when it decided to sell just the VCR

alone, a more attractive purchase for people who already had a color TV. A full decade of home video: that's a significant anniversary.

Another anniversary may or may not be less auspicious. It's been nearly a year since Kodak's 8mm video

system was unveiled and three months or so since it first went on sale in video and photo stores across the country. At this writing, before the scoresheet of the all-important Christmas buying season is tallied, it's uncertain what fate the system will have. I hope it sells well, despite its rather high price. And I hope that Kodak and Polaroid, as the electronic spear carriers with the *chutzpah* to battle the not-so-latest hostility of the established Beta and VHS systems, will make enough of a buck to insure the continuation of this diminutive format of the future. If they succeed, the other giant electronic companies in Japan will have no choice but to take the wraps off their own 8mm systems.

When that happens we'll begin to see a diversity of

new 8mm products that goes beyond the single-piece camcorder and into the domain of full-fledged mini-table-model VCRs built around the 8mm format. I've got to admit that I was one of the original 8mm skeptics who looked upon the format as one that offered more than it could deliver. The picture quality of the original demonstrations wasn't that great. But having had a Kodavision 2400 system to play around with for a couple of weeks, I've begun to change my opinion.

8mm clearly has potential. Some would argue that its picture quality, whether making original images using the lens and 1/3-inch Newvicon pickup tube in the camera or recording broadcast pictures off-air through the accessory tuner, just isn't spectacular. It's no match for the best SP and BII images I've seen made with some of the better VHS and Beta VCRs. But I'm a realist and what I saw was significantly better than the quality of LP, EP, and BIII recordings that most VCR owners generally favor to reduce tape costs. Compared to these speeds, 8mm clearly can hold its own. And considering that it's applying the same audio-with-video helically scanned FM recording technology that originally debuted under the Beta Hi-Fi label, the audio quality of the slowly moving (1.43 cm/sec.) 8mm tape is much better than the equally snail's-paced Beta and VHS slow speeds.

To put things in perspective, let's look at where the 8mm format stands in the continuing evolution of video-recording technology. It's

brand new, just hitting the stores, sort of like the original Sony SL-7200 was back in 1976 and the RCA VBT-200 SelectaVision in 1977. For folks who can remember that far back, both systems had their drawbacks.

Sony's limit was a videocassette that could record only an hour's worth of programming. But Sony fixed that by slowing down the speed of the recorder and introducing thinner tape. Today the ubiquitous L-750 cassettes outsell the original "standard" L-500 lengths and in many areas are priced more attractively.

On the VHS side of the evolutionary scale, advances have been even more significant. To be blunt, the picture quality of the LP speed on that original machine was—well, ugly. But as one model gave way to another, right up to and through the introduction of the even slower SLP (EP) speed in 1979, refinements in the circuitry of the machines (aided by the introduction of higher-grade videotapes) improved that originally lackluster picture considerably. Today's machines now have user-adjustable sharpness controls that let you decide just how sharp or mushy you want your picture to appear, plus a lot of other features.

Given what those first Beta and VHS VCRs sold for and how few features they offered (essentially, they just recorded and played back) it's worth considering just how much you get for your money when you buy a modern VCR. Even the cheapest "leader" models offer extended recording time, remote-control operation, programmable timers, and

Les Morsillo



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special-effects features like still frame and visible picture search—and all for about \$300 at discount. And if you think that \$300 price represents a “basement” level that won’t be broken, don’t kid yourself.

In other words, things are pretty rosy in the half-inch video business right now, with more VCRs moving into American living-rooms than ever before. By 1987 (not that far away), it’s expected that nearly one out of four households will have a VCR. How does this influence

the fate of 8mm?

Given the technical improvements and price reductions that have benefitted the Beta and VHS formats in the last decade, it’s reasonable to expect that the same sort of electronic evolution will be lavished on the fledgling 8mm format.

For example, there is room on the narrow tape for a separate Pulse Code Modulated digital stereo soundtrack which would provide the diminutive system with an audio capability as good as or better than the best current Beta or

VHS Hi-Fi VCR. Since the cassette is so small, there’s even the possibility that some future 8mm-based product could emerge where a tiny cassette player would serve as a sort of audio-only Walkman style player. Another possibility is for the recorder and camera sections that are now integrated into a single-piece camcorder to be separated into two components so that you could customize your choice of camera.

Kodak’s 8mm system is a delight to work with. (Technical Editor Lance Braithwaite’s extensive review of the product appeared in the November 1984 issue.) I was especially intrigued by the way it threads and shuttles the tape. After years of debating the pros and cons of Beta’s U-load vs. VHS’s M-load, the Kodak system (manufactured by Matsushita—the biggest Japanese VHS maker) uses a loading system that is virtually a miniature clone of the current Beta U-load. The tape threads up as soon as you load a cassette and stays there for all operating modes, including visible picture search in both directions. While I haven’t had a chance to evaluate one in detail as yet, my preliminary observations of the competing Polaroid 8mm system (manufactured by Toshiba—a leading Beta maker) indicate that it uses an M-load system, with the tape returning to the cassette in the stop mode.

And since the overall specifications agreed upon for 8mm in Japan last year leave the door open to a variety of different tape-loading designs, we’re apt to see 8mm machines with a few more twists before long.

The folks at Canon, Sanyo, Hitachi, and RCA have demonstrated prototype 8mm systems at trade shows, indicating that they can begin to turn out the little machines with little delay once they feel there is a demand for them.

Which brings us back to the original question. Will 8mm sell? Kodak’s \$1899 list price for a Kodavision 2400, plus another \$179 for the converter/charger, is a lot of dough. Repeat—a lot of dough. Adding another \$300 for the tuner/timer and \$239 for the cradle to house it makes the proposition even more expensive.

No half-inch camera/portable system costs as much—not even the other camcorder systems, Betamovie and VideoMovie. Despite the technical attractiveness of the new format, its initial high price (not to mention the relatively high-cost 8mm blank tape—about \$20 for a 90-minute cassette) may turn away many interested buyers.

That would be a shame, because it has a lot going for it and represents the wave of the future. It’s not going to swamp Beta and VHS, but it could carve out a healthy niche for itself.

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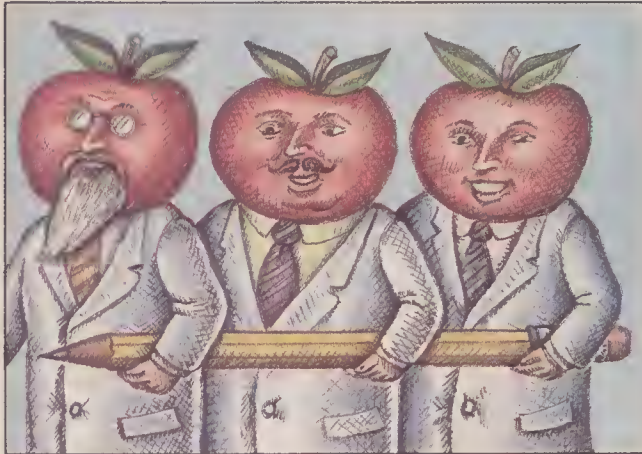
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Random Access

Personal Computers, News, and Games

Illustrations by Charles Waller



Word Processor: Three Generations

After computer games and spread sheets, word processing probably is the third most popular use of the micro-computer. Several dozen text editors are available, from the bestselling *WordStar* to the *Bank Street Writer* from Broderbund. The word on *WordStar* has always been that it's the "writer's writing program," replete with all kinds of features, including on-screen page formatting which allows you to see what your printer will do before you print. The problem with *WordStar*, however, has always been that it takes you a long time—a few weeks or more—to become fluent with it. *Bank Street Writer*, on the other hand, takes only 10 minutes of practice before you can effectively use it.

But these are only two editors, and by no means the only effective ones. People tend to stay with the word processor they've begun with, and I've stubbornly hung onto one during the past few years. Why? I don't have the stamina or inclination to learn another just for the sake of a few more features that are not likely to

greatly improve my efficiency. So I've been using *Apple Writer* in three different incarnations; version II, IIe, and recently the newly released 2.0.

The first version ran on the Apple II and II+ computers—and compared to today's standards, it was woefully cumbersome and primitive. Those computers did not have arrow keys to manipulate the cursor, so anytime you wanted to jump around the text to make deletions or additions, you had to hit the escape key twice. Even then you had to use the "IJKM" and "ESDX" keys to successfully negotiate your way in and out of paragraphs. Worse, upper case took two keystrokes per letter, including searching for the escape key with your left pinky—particularly annoying since every sentence contains at least one capital letter. Still, once you were accustomed to the idiosyncracies of *Apple Writer*, it was a far cry better than an IBM Correcting Selectric typewriter. Yet compared to my colleagues singing the virtues of *WordStar* and other editors, it was a dog.

When *Apple Writer IIe* came along, it was an up-

grade of the first version, designed especially to accommodate the "enhanced" computer, which does have arrow keys. This souped-up program speeded up the writing process mostly because the keyboard was now always in the edit mode. And the shift key became active, allowing you to type capitals the same way you do on ordinary typewriters. With the enhanced *Apple Writer I* became a reasonably happy devotee, despite some drawbacks. While I couldn't get on-screen page breaks (like *WordStar*), I could still get an advance look at the text on screen before printing it. Thanks to a 1K buffer, paragraph manipulation—an absolute necessity for writers—was as good as on any word processor I'd seen, enabling me to move most medium-sized chunks of copy around with only three keystrokes.

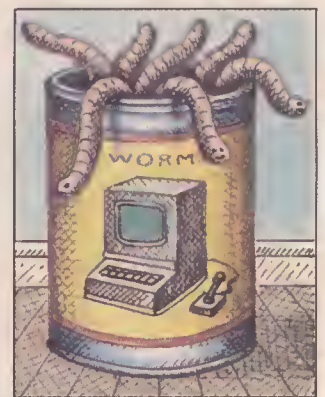
Then came version 2.0, which purportedly would enhance even the enhanced program. I've been writing with it for about three weeks, including this review—but despite several enviable improvements the package is disappointing. It loads faster than any of its *Apple Writer* predecessors, but provides 5K less usable RAM. Then again, when using print-format commands, for the first time in the series you get a fairly good idea of what your document will look like in hard copy. It's not *WordStar* (because there are no page breaks), but it's adequate.

The downside of 2.0, however, is in file management, and here is where the new editor is extremely disagreeable. Apple has become infatuated with a new disk operating system called *ProDOS*, and 2.0 uses it. While

Apple disk drives still run both *ProDOS* and the old *DOS 3.0*, any formatted 3.0 disk will not run with 2.0. This is something like getting a new LaserVision player that doesn't run any of your collection of discs.

Worst of all, *ProDOS* insists that you give your disks volume names in addition to a subtitle for each file, using slashes. This means unnecessary delays when saving text to disk. In short, the new *Apple Writer* demands that you do more fingerwork when transferring words from screen to disk and vice versa. If you've missed the first two versions of this program and begin word processing with 2.0 on an Apple IIc, chances are you won't be bothered by these petty annoyances. But if you're looking to upgrade, you will. I'll take *Apple Writer IIe* any day.

—Doug Garr



Worms?

Electronic Arts/Atari, C-64/
Disk

You have to be suspicious of any program in which the first instruction is to not read the instruction manual. Perhaps Electronic Arts was hoping that users of this purported "game" won't realize that the rules and the program have about as much in common as sushi and a knish.

According to the rules, *Worms*? is about training new, wild, auto, and un-trained worms to capture territories on a dotted grid. If a worm moves into a trail already laid by another creature, it dies. The worm that captures all six territories attached to a dot—or else the last worm left alive—is the winner.

What the program really does is another story. For one, the user's worms are trained before the start of the game, meaning that players sit and move their joysticks in all directions not having the slightest idea of how this might affect the worm. When the program is activated, simple colored lines (these must be the worms, right?) squiggle all over the screen, knocking each other off until one color is declared the victor. A normal response would be, "OK, now what?" Well, that's it.

One supposes users are expected to sit and train worms all day, eventually learning how the joystick affects the worms' later movements on the screen. But there is no incentive to continue once you've used this "game" more than once. Avoid this one.

—Tracie Forman

PictureIt On the VideoShow

Although software manufacturers have been exploiting the field of presentation graphics recently, most of their programs are limited in that they can display only up to 16 colors in any given picture. To the average user that may seem a lot—until he sees a graph produced by

PictureIt and displayed through VideoShow. *PictureIt* enables you to design a variety of graphs with up to 1000 colors each, which can then be displayed through the 16-pound portable VideoShow.

The technology that makes this possible addresses microdots rather than pixels, thus providing over three times the resolution of other graphic systems.

You create the graphs and charts with *PictureIt* and a compatible PC by coding in the various color information and saving the resulting slides to disk. The VideoShow—which has its own 8086 processor, 16K of ROM, and 256K of RAM—decodes the information and provides the actual colors. The slides can then be displayed on any TV, color monitor, or video projector; they can even be saved to videotape with voiceover if you choose. The show can be run automatically or using a remote-control keypad device.

Both software and hardware are easy to use and the documentation, though thin, is more than adequate. The manufacturer, General Parametrics, intends to release additional software (such as a drawing program) soon. *PictureIt* costs \$595 and the VideoShow runs \$3499.

—Vincent Puglia

Hackers: Heroes Of the Computer Revolution

By Steven Levy (Anchor Press/Doubleday, \$17.95)

This fairly exhaustive account of those technological adventurers affectionately called "hackers" provides a

BEST SELLERS/ HOME

1. **Dollars & Sense.** TIP, MAC, APc, IBM, AP. Monogram.
2. **Print Shop.** AP. Broderbund.
3. **Bank Street Writer.** AP, IBM, C64, AT, APc. Broderbund.
4. **Mac the Knife.** MAC. Miles Computing.
5. **Your Pers. Net Worth.** AP, C64, AT, IBM, PCjr. Scarborough.
6. **Managing Your Money.** IBM. Micro Education (MECA).
7. **Home Acct.** APc, TIP, EPS, AT, C64, IBM, TRS, AP. Arrays/Cont.
8. **Homeword.** C64, AP, AT, IBM, TIP. Sierra On-Line.
9. **ClickArt.** MAC. T/Maker.
10. **Micro Cookbook.** APe, IBM, AP, APc. Virtual Combinatics.

BEST SELLERS/ RECREATION

1. **Flight Simulator II.** AT, C64, AP. Sublogic.
2. **Sargon III.** AP, C64, IBM, MAC. Hayden Software.
3. **Flight Simulator.** IBM. Microsoft.
4. **Zork I.** CP/M, AP, DEC, IBM, AT, MAC, TIP. Infocom.
5. **Ultima III.** AP, AT, IBM, C64. Origin Systems.
6. **Summer Games.** AP, C64, AT. Epyx.
7. **Millionaire.** MAC, AP, C64, IBM, AT. Bluechip Software.
8. **Trivia Fever.** C64, AP, IBM. Professional Software.
9. **Zork III.** IBM, TRS, MAC, AT, CP/M, TIP, C64. Infocom.
10. **Zork II.** TRS, DEC, IBM, AP, AT, CP/M, TIP, MAC. Infocom.

LEGEND: AP = Apple, APc = Apple IIc, APe = Apple IIe, AT = Atari, C64 = Commodore 64, COM = Commodore Pet/CBM, CP/M = 5¼" and 8" formats, DEC = DEC Rainbow, EPS = Epson QX-10, IBM = IBM-PC, MAC = Apple Macintosh, PCjr = IBM PCjr, RIP = Texas Instruments Professional, TRS = TRS-80, VIC = Commodore Vic-20, VTR = Victor 9000, WNG = Wang Personal Computer, ZEN = Zenith 100.

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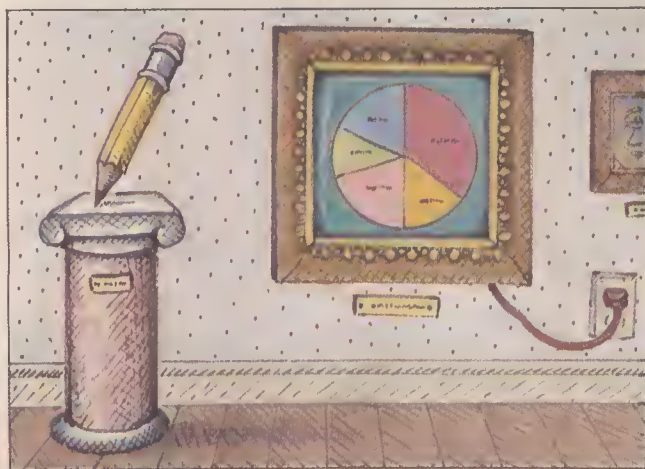
wonderful glimpse of the guys who stayed up all night to make computer software safe for the rest of the world. Author Levy is fascinated by man's mental swordplay with the microchip. He traces its history beginning with the MIT wizards who had affairs with mainframe computers in the '60s, takes us to Stanford and the next generation, and finally waltzes us through the modern era of game software design for micros.

The single thread woven through the narrative is the Hacker Ethic. For convenience, one could say it means exploring a system (even illegally, but always benevolently) to find out how it works, and making the information available to the public—*gratis*. This ethic was skewed, however, when it meant computer games. Money changes everything, and the Big Money in software sullied the ethic. (Even the infamous phone phreak Cap'n Crunch drives a Mercedes.)

In the last and best part of the book Levy uses Sierra On-Line, a software house, as a microcosm of the American Computer Dream and the price one pays to achieve it. Readers who are also computer buffs will find some familiar names among the portraits of characters: Bill Gates, Steve Wozniak, Richard Garriott. Levy has done a first-rate job illuminating the cast. Yes, they are interesting people, infinitely more so than the computers with which they spend so much time. Knowing the MIT crowd was into esoteric Chinese food helps explain a highly creative and unusual persona.

By far, *Hackers* is easily the most important work in its genre (though it's not a computer book) since Tracy Kidder's critically acclaimed *The Soul of a New Machine*. (I should add, too, that my enthusiasm for the book may be clouded or inflated by a close friendship with the author. But I hope it hasn't.)

—Doug Garr



New Channels

Covering Cable, Pay-Per-View, STV, and DBS

The Way We Are by Tim Onosko



After World War II, as television's impact was first being felt, many recognized its potential to become the greatest educational medium ever invented. Almost 40 years later this potential remains unrealized. Strictly

speaking, there is no "educational" television except for the institutional programming produced by schools and universities. Who remembers the transition educational television made when it suddenly became Public Broadcasting?

Traditionally, scholars looked to the past to learn, and by studying television of the 1950s and '60s we can recall the way things were. Television's hold was strong, and until the middle '60s America was an almost monolithic culture dictated at least in part by the three commercial broadcast networks.

Today, the power of television may actually be greater. There is almost total "penetration" into U.S. homes. Most sets owned are color sets. Well over a third of all households subscribe to cable, with more than half expected by the end of the de-

cade. With video recorders we can watch more television than in the past. Access to satellite-delivered signals staggers the imagination.

But this power has been diffused because there are more programs being produced than ever before. Only a few of them—CBS's *60 Minutes* is one example—become national meetings. So what will the media archaeologists dust off to study in the near future? From which of today's television programs will they learn about how we live today?

□ **Cable News Network.** Some years ago Vanderbilt University began a project to begin gathering three nightly newscasts from NBC, CBS, and ABC every day. This would let us look back to see how events and individuals were portrayed and how they affected the nation. If TV news was important in the past, CNN makes it vital. For the first time it is possible to be almost completely informed by just watching TV. And because CNN culls its news from so many diverse sources, it works on us differently. It is less suspicious than the network news, and the heavy editorial hand seems absent. To cable subscribers who use CNN, the network is redefining TV news. Stories are typically longer. Commentators are professional and stylish without becoming what CBS calls "news stars." Though it is a practical impossibility, it would be valuable for CNN to start an archive of every one of its stories to build the best and most complete library of television's portrait of ourselves.

□ **The PTL Club.** The Reverend Jim Bakker's North Carolina-based PTL network is a runner-up in the TV religion race. The winner, of course, is Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network, one of cable's most successful new networks. There is much to be learned from Bakker and his gang, though. It is a goofy kaleidoscopic collection of TV ministers led by Bakker himself and his wife Tammy Fay. Jim and Tammy are—well, there's no other way of saying it: they're *odd*. There's something disturbingly boyish about Bakker. He is short of stature and has the features of a preteen, though his greying hair indicates middle age. Tammy Fay, a sometime singer, is brassy and boisterous, not the slightest bit subtle. It is almost refreshing to see people this naive about telegenics. And while a national debate rages over the blending of religion and politics, PTL has remained "pure"—purely interested, it seems, in money and how much it can collect from its audience. Bakker—who occasionally broadcasts from his rather plush home in Palm Desert, California—is into real estate lately, pushing a kind of time-share condo development, theme park, and shopping mall called Heritage U.S.A. No piker, he isn't afraid to go after big contributions of \$100 or more when the spirit moves him. In doing so he gives us a vivid picture of electronic religion in the 1980s.

□ **Puttin' on the Hits.** This syndicated program tells us more about celebrity than a mile-high stack of *People* magazines. For those who haven't found this program rattling around in the early-



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New Channels

morning hours, *POTH* offers ordinary people the chance to "lip sync" their favorite songs. These are no shy amateurs, though. The contestants (who compete for cash prizes) are true extroverts, often costumed for effect. That these manicurists, repairmen, and clerks want a taste of TV is not enough. Add to the mix a "celebrity" host you've never heard of (Allen Fawcett) and a "celebrity" panel of judges (concocted stars of minor, no miniscule, magnitude such as Frank Zappa's daughter Moon,

nee "Moon Unit") and you have an unbelievable study in the effects of fame. It is required, not recommended, viewing.

□ **American Bandstand.** Since the late 1950s Dick Clark has presided over this perennial, a keen view of American youth. While Philadelphia, the show's original home, was once the arbiter of kid taste, it is now Los Angeles and the *Bandstand* teenagers are, if not trend-setters, pretty good barometers of what is selling in youth culture. At this writing, at least, the well-scrubbed bandstanders

are into whites and pastels, Bermudas, gym shorts, and prosperity. Take away the squarely middle-of-pop music and you might as well have a meeting of the Orange County Young Republicans. Americans are often chided for chasing lost youth, and Dick Clark is past laughing at middle age. He's now challenging old age and Alzheimer's Disease. If only 25 years of *American Bandstand* could be telescoped into a single episode, viewers might never recover from the shock.

□ **Saturday-Morning Fare.** It would be unfair to single out one Saturday-morning kids' show. Each is barely palatable in its own right. While once parents' groups would raise their voices in anger over the general degeneration of kids' programming, the cries seem to have subsided. Why? The "baby boomers," whose children are now the chief audience for this stuff, were the first TV generation, and as such probably care less than their predecessors about what children watch and why. Anyway, no 10-year-old worth his or her salt would be caught dead watching the *Smurfs*, *Snorks*, or *Shirt Tales* anyway. By that age they're on their way to the *A-Team* and *Paper Dolls*. All that's left of Saturday morning are Warner Brothers cartoons that have been laundered of violent episodes and witless animated series designed to sell licensed aftermarket merchandise. In fairness, the programs may not be any better or worse than those on which the postwar generation grew up. The lesson to be learned is a gripping one, though: Saturday-morning network shows teach children to lower their expectations and how to respond to TV itself. Cable's Nickelodeon channel may or may not be preferable, but it does seem to be more in tune with kids and their interests.

□ **C-SPAN.** Not enough can be said about this, the most classically "educational" cable service. C-SPAN (an acronym for Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network) offers coverage of the United States House of Representatives and brings its cameras to seminars, meetings, and luncheons in Washington D.C. Its importance to the future, however, is often unrecognized. In its own low-budget barebones fashion C-SPAN is producing a remarkable documentary of politics and the media. It's irregular *Day in the Life* series—which covers an entire day, with political figures, or at a newspaper like Gannett's *USA Today*—is television like no one else is doing. And the often-reported noon meetings at the National Press Club give viewers the opportunity to see news being gathered at the primary source level. Again, this is a channel whose total output should be saved for future generations.

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Video's Guide to PROGRAMMING

NEWS & VIEWS

Support Your Retailer, 'Cause What's Here Today May Be Gone Tomorrow

Support your local full-line video store—which is coming under attack from all sides. If you don't, it will disappear at just about the time when you realize you need it more than ever before.

You may be seeing video programs popping up in unexpected places: newsstands, grocery stores, on your way to the train station, toy stores, drug stores, book stores, sports shops, or hardware stores. Such places are not in the program business *per se*, but find it profitable to add recorded videos to their other merchandise. There is also a noticeable rise in the number of mail-order sources listed in magazines, newspapers, and general sales catalogues.

A full-line program retailer carries all the top movie releases, which he offers through low-cost rental plans. Unlike those new convenience outlets that handle video, a "full catalogue" retailer offers much more. You can browse at leisure over his shelves to discover titles you've heard about but never saw at local movie-houses or in commercially butchered late-night TV schedules. You can paw through his counter catalogues and press books. He intelligently answers your questions, learns your tastes, and he calls your attention to programming you would otherwise miss. To serve his customers, my long-time friend John Dinwoodie, who runs the Video Specialties store in Houston, groups together a whole wall of children's programming. He operates a special subscription plan to let you check out, and view at your own speed, the entire 26-volume *World at War* series from Thorn EMI. Try that at one of the top-10 outlets!

The pressures to turn the sale of video



Illustrations by Frank Maraschiella

programs into a specialized, robotized, shrinkwrapped, blinking-light, bank-card, no-rental/no-return, dehumanized merchandising operation are mounting rapidly. The program companies, particularly the big Hollywood-based labels, look at the still phenomenal year-to-year growth of home video and conclude that their profits are not growing proportionately—something for which they are almost totally blaming, too simplistically, on the traditional retailer. The movie companies are responding in two directions.

First, as more of us hook into pay-TV, cable, and other transmission systems, the movie companies are hoping to short-circuit program stores by offering us pay-per-view or "one exhibition rental" access to new movies, after theaters but well before they get to the video store. Though the price per movie may be roughly the same as a store rental, the companies find their income is greater, their costs less, and their control more complete through

pay-per-view than through store distribution—over which they lose all control under the copyright law's First Sale Doctrine. Second, as a title moves into hard-copy distribution, saturation retailing becomes the order of the day. The movie companies are gearing up to push video programs through any and every kind of outlet that will take them.

The odd thing about all this is that the movie companies—in their greed and haste to video release too much, too fast—are fueling the very circumstances they have been complaining about. The top movie-industry spokesman, Motion Picture Association of America President Jack Valenti, is fond of describing motion pictures as experiences over which the creative community that produces them must always have control. He gets upset over any suggestion that, when a movie jumps from the silver screen to the TV screen, it somehow turns into a commodity. But that's exactly where the path of the movie

By Ken Winslow

companies into hit-and-run merchandising is going to lead.

When Sears, Safeway, K-Mart, and U-Haul handle a video movie, it's a commodity. But when John Dinwoodie sells or rents you a movie on video, it's going to be treated with all the appreciation and respect it was meant to have.

CBS on High-Def, Text: Goodbye to All That

Instead of tomorrow, it's going to take a little longer. So now admits CBS. Plans for development of high-definition television (HDTV) and broadcast teletext have been cut to the bone, if not completely dumped. CBS says it is still interested and will keep its hand in. The company at last recognizes that both technologies will require lots of industry-wide cooperation.

HDTV, which would have doubled our present 525-line frame-scanning system and horizontally widened television's present 4 by 3 aspect ratio, was first proposed by CBS as part of a new set of ahead-of-the-state-of-the-art technical specifications for use with the direct broadcasting satellite (DBS) service. But since CBS has indefinitely, if not forever, postponed its entry into DBS, it no longer has this foundation on which to argue the HDTV/DBS concept. An alternative proposal, which also seems not to have gotten off the ground, would have permitted CBS to combine adjacent frequencies to get the wide transmission bandwidth required for HDTV signals. HDTV, says CBS, is more likely to come about first as a professional production or closed-circuit distribution medium, for which manufacturers can more easily make and sell costly HDTV equipment in small and more evolutionary steps.

Note that while there is wide agreement that our present NTSC TV system needs improving, there are many different proposals on how to do it. Almost all are a lot less radical than the proposal of CBS, which was joined by NHK and a group of Japanese companies hot to develop a new potential market.

As for broadcast teletext, CBS concludes that while there is some interest in it, there is not enough to justify the special efforts required to develop and sell the outboard technology. CBS says the answer for teletext (and I would add HDTV) lies in the development of a digital TV set which could accommodate the necessary built-in circuitry at a lower cost than today's analog TVs. Toshiba, one of the first to show an all-digital TV last June—but one with no provision for teletext—points to the direction in which CBS is waiting for manufacturers to go.

While this cutback in CBS technology may disappoint some, in the long run it is for the best, particularly if CBS puts its expertise into advancing what we have today instead of trying to short-circuit it with a "tomorrow technology."



Admen to ScanAmerica With a Magic Wand

Until now, broadcasters—satisfied that theirs has been the dominant medium—have been content with merely counting TV homes and the hours and minutes our sets are on. Never mind that only the family dog may be watching. Numbers were numbers and all that counted were HUTs (Homes Using Television). With competition from non-TV broadcast sources, however, broadcast advertisers are not only insisting that viewing statistics be related to people actually watching a given program (PUTs—people using television), but also whether or not they understand and act on the advertising message.

"ScanAmerica" is the working name for efforts to develop an interactive "people meter" to give admen the numbers. It will not only keep a record of what programs were viewed and let viewers indicate what they thought of them, but also let viewers enter various kinds of purchased-product information by use of the optically sensed Universal Product Code (UPC) that you see on almost every item you buy these days. Various schemes are already in operation to give advertisers computer access to summarized checkout-stand information to test the effectiveness of local advertising, pricing, and packaging. ScanAmerica would add a UPC wand-scanning capability to TV-set viewing meters of the type now used by A.C. Nielsen. The result would be to combine program-watching data with product-purchasing information

for automatic uploading by phone line to some central computer in the middle of the night.

Sounds scary. ScanAmerica will not be ready until 1986—by which time I will make it a point to be sure that my dog watches only his own TV, whether I am home or not.

For TV Freebies, Bird Is the Word

If your system has the right connections, there is almost no end to the growing amount of video press, preview, and promotional material you can tap into in some way. Transmission to satellite TV receivers (TVROs) has become a favorite means of PR propagation because it reduces the cost and complexity of sending tape copies, and distribution via satellite "birds" is widespread and practically instantaneous.

More than 750 TV stations are equipped with TVROs, and you can pull down the same material with your own TVRO. A monthly 30-minute *Movie World* feed, sent free to over 200 TV stations for use in local news and feature programming, contains a mix of short news and talk-show segments, open-ended interviews, and excerpts from current films of up to six minutes in length. A weekly 30-minute *Spotlight: Hollywood* contains a combination of news coverage, publicity releases, and paid-for exposure of clients seeking visibility; that one goes to some 400 stations. One of the newest satellite press/publicity distribution services begun by Los Angeles' based J-Nex last fall, sent over Telstar, started off with a weekly feed designed to attract film studios, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and others who want to get the word out about their

new products and services, news events, and position statements.

And for those of you who frequent video stores instead of TVRO'ing, there's Fred Willard's twice-a-month *Videophile*. Willard, of former *Real People* and *Fernwood Tonight* fame, takes the role of a program retailer who is such a fanatic that he lives day and night in his store. The 20-minute *Videophile* is distributed free to 14,000 stores twice a month as a trailer compilation of clips for current and coming video releases along with advertising intended to be seen while you are in the store. The idea is to represent many different labels in every issue of *Videophile*. For those who remember the newsletter of the same name, published several years ago, there is no connection. *Videophile* is not meant to be a "takeout," but only you and your salesman will ever know.

MGM/UA 'Tracks March To Different Drummers

Beginning with the October releases of *Breakin'* and *The Soldier's Tale*, all MGM/UA Beta and VHS Hi-Fi releases will carry a Videophonic Sound logo. MGM/UA, in association with its duplicator VCA, has developed a duplication process that uses digitally mastered audio tracks to optimize the sound intended for the Hi-Fi and the fixed-head longitudinal audio tracks. MGM/UA seems to indicate by this announcement that it believes it has eliminated the compromises that sometimes had to be made during the single duplicating pass, in which time both Hi-Fi and regular audio tracks are transferred.

In addition to handling duplication for its future releases in this manner, MGM/UA says we can now expect to see the reissue of such back titles as *2001*, *Fame*, *Pink Floyd: The Wall*, *The Nutcracker* and *Brainstorm*. Hooray for better audio! I'm all for it. But if you already have laid out cold cash for any of these titles, this is not going to make you happy. Wouldn't it be nice if MGM/UA had a trade-in plan for those who wanted to upgrade their previously purchased low-fi copies?

Do Be a B-Fan

B Westerns are getting renewed interest from NTA, IUD, and other labels. But the best collection from a single source at reasonable prices can be had by mail-order from Cumberland Video (3917 Riverside Dr. #104, Burbank, Cal. 91505; 818-846-7435). They date from the early '30s to the early '50s and include such gems as Gene Autry's debut *In Old Santa Fe* (1934); the first sound Zorro film, *The Bold Caballero* (1936) with Bob Livingston; *Song of the Gringo* (1936), said to be Tex Ritter's greatest film; and the ever-omnipotent *Purple Vigilantes* (1938) with Bob Livingston, Ray Corrigan, and Max Terhune. A mail-order source that cares, Cumberland tells you date and running

TOP 10 PROGRAMS

Cassette Sales

- 1. Romancing the Stone** (3)*. Color. 1984. Michael Douglas, Kathleen Turner. 106 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). \$79.98. CBS/Fox.
- 2. Footloose** (2). Color. 1984. Kevin Bacon, Lori Singer, John Lithgow. 107 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). \$39.95. Paramount.
- 3. Jane Fonda's Workout** (1). Color. 1982. Jane Fonda assisted by 7 instructors. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Karl.
- 4. Splash** (-). Color. 1984. Tom Hanks, Daryl Hannah. 109 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$79.95. Touchstone.
- 5. Raiders of the Lost Ark** (7). Color. 1981. Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, Wolf Kahler. 115 min. (Beta Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). VHS (stereo, cl. cap.). \$39.95. Paramount.
- 6. Mickey** (6). Color, B&W. Animated. Cartoon Classics Limited Gold Edition of Mickey Mouse cartoons; includes "Steamboat Willie." 51 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Disney (drop 8/84).
- 7. Terms of Endearment** (4). Color. 1983. Shirley MacLaine, Jack Nicholson. 132 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$39.95. Paramount.
- 8. Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes** (-). Color. 1984. Christopher Lambert, Ralph Richardson, Ian Holm. 130 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). \$79.95. Warner.
- 9. Against All Odds** (-).

Color. 1983. Rachel Ward, Jeff Bridges. 122 min. (R) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (Hi-Fi Dolby stereo). \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.

- 10. Heartbeat City** (-). Color. 1984. The Cars perform "You Might Think," "Magic," others. 48 min. Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo). \$29.98. Warner.

Videodisc Sales

- 1. Romancing the Stone** (7)*. As above, "Cassette Sales." LV (closed captions). \$34.98. CED (cl. cap.). \$19.98. CBS/Fox.
- 2. Splash** (-). As above, "Cass. Sales." LV (stereo). \$34.95. CED (stereo). \$29.95. Touchstone.
- 3. The Big Chill** (1). Color. 1983. Glenn Close, Kevin Kline. CED. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.
- 4. Footloose** (-). As above, "Cass. Sales." LV, CED. \$29.95. Paramount.
- 5. Against All Odds** (-). As above, "Cass. Sales." LV, CED. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.
- 6. Blame It on Rio** (-). Color. 1984. Michael Caine, Demi Moore. 90 min. (R) LV. \$39.95. CED. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.
- 7. The Right Stuff** (3). Color. 1983. Scott Glenn, Ed Harris, Sam Shepard. 193 min. (PG) LV (stereo, CX). \$39.98. CED. \$29.98. Warner.
- 8. Educating Rita** (-). Color. 1983. Michael Caine, Julie Walters. (PG) LV, CED. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.
- 9. Swing Shift** (-). Color. 1984. Goldie Hawn, Kurt Russell. 100 min. (PG)

LV, CED. \$39.98. Warner.

- 10. Terms of Endearment** (4). As above, "Cass. Sales." LV. \$39.95. CED. \$29.95. Paramount.

Cassette Rentals

- 1. Romancing the Stone** (3)*. As above, "Cassette Sales." \$79.98. CBS/Fox.
- 2. Splash** (-). As above, "Cass. Sales." \$79.95. Touchstone.
- 3. Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes** (-). As above, "Cass. Sales." \$79.95. Warner.
- 4. Against All Odds** (-). As above, "Cass. Sales." \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.
- 5. Footloose** (6). As above, "Cass. Sales." \$39.95. Paramount.
- 6. Sixteen Candles** (-). Color. 1984. Molly Ringwald, Paul Dooley, Justin Henry. 93 min. (PG) Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (Dolby B). \$79.95. MCA.
- 7. Yentl** (-). Color. 1983. Barbra Streisand, Mandy Patinkin, Amy Irving. 134 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi). \$79.98. CBS/Fox.
- 8. The Big Chill** (1). As above, "Videodisc Sales." Beta (Hi-Fi, closed captions). VHS (cl. cap.). \$79.95. RCA/Columbia.
- 9. Ieman** (-). Color. 1984. Timothy Hutton, John Lone, Lindsay Crouse. 101 min. (PG) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo, surround sound). VHS (Dolby B stereo, surr. sound). \$69.95. MCA.
- 10. The Ice Pirates** (-). Color. 1984. Robert Urich, Mary Crosby. 93 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$79.95. MGM/UA.

*Number in parentheses indicates position last month; (-) indicates program is new listing.

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time. Titles are also referenced by star: Roy Rogers, Eddie Dean, Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, Ken Maynard, Tom Tyler, Tex Ritter, Johnny Mack Brown, Bob Steele, John Wayne, Tim Holt, Harry Carey, and others. Prices run from \$25 to \$29.91 plus \$2 shipping and handling.

The Rest Is History

The latest 25-page edition of the International Historic Films (IHF) catalogue represents one of the richest video collections, with documentary, propaganda, and cultural offerings. A great many are U.S.-

produced but you'll find many German, Swedish, Japanese, Czech, Russian, and other foreign productions supplied with their original language tracks, with occasional use of English subtitles. Major topic groupings include World War II, Aviation History, Naval History, the 1950s Era (see the *One Week in October* recreation of the handling of the Cuban missile crisis), Vietnam War, a group of foreign films (includes the incredible 1932 *Land Without Bread* film by Luis Bunuel about impoverished people in the Las Hurdes region of Spain), and a section devoted to German films from the '30s and '40s.

R E V I E W S

FILM CLIPS

Produced for Theaters

Manhattan

B&W. 1979. Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Michael Murphy, Mariel Hemingway, Meryl Streep; dir. Allen. 95 min. Beta, VHS. \$79.95. MGM/UA. Reproduction: A

Even people who live in the other boroughs of Greater New York call Manhattan "New York City," often just "the City"—a great beehive of a place with a justifiably high sense of self-esteem and of its own uniqueness. And it buzzes with the pretensions that often accompany all that: as Woody Allen's Isaac says of people like Diane Keaton's Mary, "They probably sit around on the floor with wine and cheese and mispronounce 'allegorical' and 'didacticism.'" Allen's *Manhattan* is about that place and those people, about their lives and loves, though the only romance that doesn't seem futile or frustrated as they combine and recombine is Allen's romance with Manhattan itself. If this love poem to NYC/NY isn't as well-loved as *Play It Again, Sam* or *Annie Hall*, it could only be because it doesn't have as clear-cut a *denouement*. But that's because it's too honest to have one—life isn't always like that—and the movie thus shows a clear progression over Allen's previous works. It's an *honest* love poem.

Ah, but love can be excruciatingly complex. Isaac watches horrified as the marriage of Yale (Michael Murphy) and Emily (Ann Byrne) falls apart. The wedge is Mary, who also pries Isaac away from 17-year-old Tracy (Mariel Hemingway) before returning to Yale, leaving an agonized Isaac to attempt an uncertain reconciliation with Tracy at the end. In the meantime Isaac's quit his job in a regrettable rage to write a book, while one of his ex-wives (Meryl Streep)—who took their kid and left him for another woman—is writing a book of her own about the breakup of their marriage. She claims it's "honest," but it's no love poem. As Yale says in an-



other context, "Gossip is the new pornography."

Like New York itself *Manhattan* is full of writers. One who pops up in a cameo role is playwright Wallace "My Dinner with Andre" Shawn, who in turn reminds me of Andre Gregory's borrowed characterization of New Yorkers who "exist in a state of schizophrenia" as guards in a self-created prison and are "unable to even see it as a prison." Like New Yorkers themselves, a lot of these characters have shrinks, and they imprison themselves in romantic toings and fro-ings. Why? Isaac asks his Sony recorder while dictating for the book. It must be to avoid confronting the "terrifying problems" of life (which Andre discusses in greater detail in the other movie). Isaac: "Then why is life worth living?" He answers himself by listing his favorite works of art—one of which is Tracy's face, which he then rushes out to confront. The face tells him, "You have to have a little faith in people." As the movie and the urban life on which it's based both show, it's easier to have faith in people than in one person—but then, Manhattan is greater than the

sum of its parts. That's the real reason why Woody's Isaac loves Manhattan, and that hopeful sobriety is the real reason why I love *Manhattan*.

MGM/UA's preview cassette shows that Allen's passionate battle to preserve the film's original widescreen proportions ended in victory. In lieu of a scan job that would have recast his visual compositions for the narrower TV screen, the VHS tape follows RCA's CED-release precedent in "masking" the top and bottom of the screen in grey—an excellent and unobtrusive choice, though I would have chosen a slightly darker shade given Allen's rather polarized black & white contrasts, themselves faithfully reproduced with thoroughly black blacks. True, the masking treatment makes for a small image—but I solved the problem simply by moving from the easy chair (nine feet away from my 19-inch monitor) to the sofa (six feet away). MGM/UA recently announced a new sound-transfer process that handles the Hi-Fi and longitudinal tracks separately from digital masters; the result here is that the latter renders the lush orchestral score

so vibrantly that the former seems superfluous. And that's important, for if Allen's words are a love poem to Manhattan, his choice of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" for theme music is his love song. —Mark Fleischmann

Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?

Color, B&W. 1983. Karen Black, Michael Emil, Michael Margotta; writ. & dir. Henry Jaglom. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Monterey. Reproduction: B+

Tracks

Color. 1976. Dennis Hopper, Taryn Power, Dean Stockwell, Topo Swope, Zack Norman, Michael Emil; writ. & dir. Henry Jaglom. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Monterey. Reproduction: B-

These two dramas—one a lighthearted but moving New York romance in the *Annie Hall* mold, the other an emotionally charged (and draining) saga about a Vietnam vet on a cross-country train with his best friend's corpse—showcase the scripting and directing talent of Henry Jaglom. Both can be classed as conversational movies in that each uses liberal amounts of talk to sketch memorable characters. Both use '40s pop and American folksong to comment on the action. And both use a recurring character to tie together Jaglom's disparate fictions.

That character is played in both movies by Yiddish-accented Michael Emil, whose wooing of Karen Black is the premise of *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?* Black is Zee, whose paper-shuffling husband worms out of her life at the outset, leaving her to meet the 45ish Eli (Emil) in the throes of her agony at an Upper West Side sidewalk cafe. And an odd couple they are: the neurotic, emotional, artistic, relentlessly illogical Zee versus the neurotic, emotional, studious, relentlessly logical Eli.

Complicating matters is Larry, who owns a trained pigeon that flies back to his hand when he flings it aloft. When he picks up Zee (as Eli watches in astonishment) at the very same sidewalk cafe, it's hard to blame her for preferring a young, handsome, cigar-chomping actor to a balding white-collar drudge who measures his pulse rate during sex with an earlobe-inserted object and says, "Don't worry—this is all a comparison with women from the past." Yes, Eli thinks love is quantifiable. Somehow, though, emotion and logic come together in an ending that's happier than *Annie Hall's* but still makes sense.

Tracks casts Dennis Hopper as Sgt. Jack Falen, an emotional casualty of the Vietnam War whose trip with his dead friend turns out to be his hardest tour of duty. The tape player he carries emits the ghosts of Crosby and Dorsey, isolating him from the context established when the movie opens with the sound of President Nixon's "peace with honor" announcement. He is similarly isolated from the people he meets on the train: Stephanie (Taryn Power) and Chloe (Topo Swope), on their way home from college and looking for kicks; Mark

(Dean Stockwell), radical on the run; Gene (Zack Norman), the G-man who nails him; and Emile, re-enacted by Michael Emil as a carbon copy of *Cherry Pie's* charming, argumentative Eli, right down to his rap on the link between sneezing and orgasm.

And like the other movie, *Tracks* hops briskly from conversation to conversation to build its set of characterizations on accumulation of detail. That done, however, the focus shifts to Falen and the pace shifts from reflective chamber drama to psychological action movie as bizarre hallucinations involving the other passengers multiply in his head. Finally, he tries to talk to Gene about Emile only to be told no such person is on the train. But Emile's there, if only in Falen's mind, and fries the screen in closeup as he tortures Falen with a scathing monologue on how the world chews a man up and spits him out. Falen is fallen, beyond the point of no return. War has toppled his moral values. He has internalized so much guilt and horror at his friend's death that it lacerates him from within. He has witnessed so much deadly force that he becomes one himself—a man with a gun who can't tell fantasy from reality. The final frames are shattering.

VHS transfer quality (whew!—down to earth) is good in *Cherry Pie* but only tolerable in *Tracks'* murky interiors.

—Mark Fleischmann

Moscow on the Hudson

Color. 1984. Robin Williams, Maria Conchita Alonso, Cleavant Derricks; dir. Paul Mazursky. 115 min. Beta, VHS. \$79.95./CED. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia. Reproduction: A

A genuine sweetness pervades this affecting little movie: a tribute to freedom, the wondrous melting pot that is New York City, and the resilience of immigrants who leave everything they know and love to seek an unfettered happiness in the U.S.A. *Moscow on the Hudson* is patriotic in the best way, balancing the good and bad to be

found on these shores and still coming out with the spirit of a Fourth-of-July sparkler.

Robin Williams gives his best screen performance to date as a Russian circus saxophonist who loves American jazz and defects in Bloomingdale's while on a cultural-exchange tour. (His best crony, a sad-faced clown who gives him the idea, loses his nerve and remains a "bird without wings" while Williams soars.) What follows is a detailed New York odyssey for the liberated Russian. His best friends are an Italian salesgirl and a black security guard from Bloomie's, and before long we realize director Paul Mazursky has peopled his film with ethnics and the disenfranchised. What is a New Yorker? The Cuban immigration lawyer who rushes to Williams' aid? The Indian doctor who attends him when he collapses from hyperventilation? The gay who mistakes his beatific smile for an invitation? Yes—all these and more.

The humor in *Moscow on the Hudson* has the slightly offbeat, exaggerated quality of Mazursky's other movies, but none of his previous characters were quite like this marvelous Russian—and what Williams does with him. He's so convincing and touching that, apart from a wonderfully funny culture-shock sequence in which the busload of Russian visitors encounter Calvin Klein ads and breakdancers in Times Square, the movie is never as spontaneous and alive as when Williams is on-screen. In fact, it almost runs out of steam toward the end, when Mazursky's tone turns almost too bittersweet for its own good. But again Williams rescues it with honesty, simplicity, and amazing authenticity.

The best thing about RCA/Columbia's very good transfer is the retitling, for video, of the long introductory segment set in Moscow. This is exemplary because the new subtitles are clear, appropriately timed, and sensibly arranged for the home screen. Since the first 20 minutes of the film are in Russian, it really matters.

—Harvey Elliott



Moscow on the Hudson



Beat Street

Yentl

Color. 1983. Barbra Streisand, Mandy Patinkin, Amy Irving; **dir.** Streisand. 134 min. **Beta, VHS.** \$79.98./LV. \$39.98. **CED.** \$19.98. **CBS/Fox.** **Reproduction:** B+

With her first full-fledged directorial credit, Barbra Streisand has neither fallen on her face nor emerged as a great moviemaker. Meticulous and tireless, Streisand nurtured this project—based on Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story—for years.

Reverent, nostalgic, and often beautiful to look at, *Yentl* is a personal statement by a woman who has had to prove herself in a man's world, and who will remain somewhat of a loner because of that until the times catch up with her. Though she made it for her father ("and all our fathers"), she balances tradition with nascent feminism, making Yentl's gender disguise and subsequent liberation therefrom a painful and touching progress. While pretending to be a boy so she can study at *yeshiva*, Yentl falls in love with her best (male) friend and then actually marries a woman. The sexual reverberations of the situation are handled with a total lack of self-consciousness by Streisand and her excellent costars, Mandy Patinkin and Amy Irving. That, along with skillful production design, takes us deep into another world where women were revered but never allowed to grow.

At best *Yentl* has emotionalism and a sensitivity born of sincerity. At worst it is saddled with an insistent, monotonous score and repetitive lyrics (mostly performed as interior monologues while Yentl exults or agonizes), and a heavyhanded literalness that punches out its images in double doses. When Yentl sings about her just-deceased father, "Looking at the skies/I seem to see a million eyes/Which ones are yours?," Streisand's camera insists on pivoting across the skies to *show* the million eyes. We don't really have to see that. Barbra, we can't hear you.

So it's not art, but it's well-meaning and certainly inoffensive. Though Streisand directed, produced, cowrote, and starred, it

surprisingly doesn't bear the mark of an egomaniac: the camera never shows Streisand when it should have been watching something or someone else. There are a few echoes of an earlier, brassier Barbra: When told by the rabbi that she's been accepted into *yeshiva*, Yentl says "I'm a student?," then again coyly, "I'm a student"—just like Fanny Frice says "I'm a Ziegfeld girl." And that unfortunate ocean-freighter finale with Yentl at the prow reminds us again of *Funny Girl* long after Streisand has worked hard to give *Yentl* its own emotional climax—and succeeded.

The CBS/Fox tape, in VHS Hi-Fi, sounds sumptuous, and when Streisand's voice is reproduced with such clarity it is still a wonder. Visually, though, she has designed a movie in shades of brown, which works well for her period storybook flavor but makes for a drab home-screen experience. The generic CBS/Fox look—diffuse contrast where all colors are on the soft side and blacks are never really black—doesn't help. —Harvey Elliott

Beat Street

Color. 1984. Guy Davis, Jon Chardiet, Rae Dawn Chong; **dir.** Stan Lathan. **Beta, VHS.** \$79.95./LV. \$34.95. **Vestron.** **Reproduction:** B+

Now here's a novelty: a breakdance movie in which the acting is as good as the dancing—and the dancing's good indeed. *Beat Street* is the kind of pop movie that even people who normally make a fetish of obscure foreign films with subtitles can enjoy.

This is mainly the story of Kenny, an aspiring DJ, and Ramo, a graffiti artist. Kenny is looking for a chance to make his move from parties in a condemned tenement to a club in the city. He's a much-better-than-average rap artist, so it's just a matter of getting the right break. He spends a lot of time in his room trying out new sounds and scratching up records. Ramo just wants his father to recognize him as an artist and quit carping that he hasn't gotten around to marrying the mother of his son. Something of a modern-day Ahab, Ramo tends to go into a trance whenever he sees a white subway train.

He's also on the trail of some lowlife who goes around defacing true art by spray-painting "Spit" over Ramo's work. The ultimate confrontation between these two is one of the best—and certainly most suspenseful—parts of the movie. Kenny's girl, who looks like a cross between Jennifer Beals and Irene Cara, is a composition major at CCNY. The only really unbelievable scene is the young lovers walking across Central Park at night without running into anything more threatening than Tavern on the Green.

The music is first-rate, with excellent stereo separation, and the dances are polished without sacrificing the freshness of their street origins. Both music and dance fit seamlessly into the fabric of the plot, and the finale—a New Year's Eve show at New York's Roxy—is a must-see. With Kenny at the helm, it includes Grandmaster Melle Mel and the Furious Five, 25 breakers, the City College dancers, and a Bronx Gospel choir.

Beat Street succeeds where other films of this ilk have failed: it makes the popular culture of "hiphop," including graffiti, understandable as an artform. If that seems too highfalutin', ignore the message and enjoy. After all, as one character comments, "This ain't New York. This is the Bronx." —Louise Kohl

Footloose

Color. 1984. Kevin Bacon, John Lithgow, Dianne Wiest; **dir.** Herbert Ross. 107 min. **Beta, VHS.** \$39.95./LV. **CED.** \$29.95. **Paramount.** **Reproduction:** A

Considering the mental state of most of the characters in this ridiculous movie, the producers should have called it *Screwloose*. Set in a town inhabited solely by book-burning religious nuts who have passed an ordinance forbidding dancing, *Footloose* focuses on Ren, the new boy in town (Kevin Bacon), who becomes an object of hatred and derision among the town's grownups because he wears a tie to school, likes *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and owns a few audio-cassette tapes. The kids are no better. Repressed by their inability to dance—though they have no problem finding sex—their only outlet for expression seems to be in playing "chicken" with ev-



Footloose

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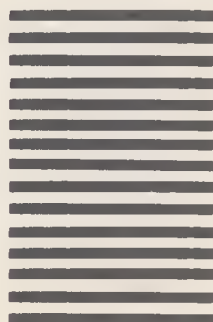
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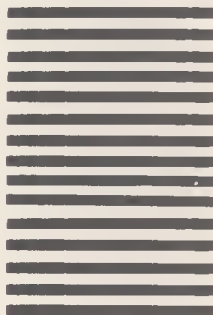
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ery conceivable moving vehicle. We have car chicken, tractor chicken, and train chicken, with any number of close escapes. Obviously, these kids want to dance so badly they could die.

After about a half-dozen music videos—only “Let’s Hear It for the Boy” is any good—Ren rallies most of the kids around the idea of promoting a dance. The townspeople—with the on-again/off-again backing of their neurotic minister, father of the town slut—strenuously oppose this even after Ren reads them dance quotations from the Bible. They have the dance anyway, across the tracks, and it turns out it’s the most innocent screen party since *Beach Blanket Bingo*. The only people who seem sexually aroused by the dancing (everybody’s big fear) are the minister and his wife, who watch from a nearby field.

This is not a cartoon. It features real actors trying not to look foolish. Virtually no one succeeds in this except Bacon, whose incredulous expression often matches ours.

This movie, oddly enough, has been re-produced as one of the year’s best LV discs, with fine stereo separation in the musical numbers and a bass strength that drew knocks from my downstairs neighbors. Though the younger actors mumble a lot, most of the dialogue track is clear and noise-free. Good color balance, with reds kept in check, is evident throughout. A lot of care has gone into this junk.

—Harvey Elliott

Never Cry Wolf

Color. 1983. Charles Martin Smith, Brian Dennehy, Zachary Littman; dir. Carroll Ballard. 105 min. Beta, VHS. \$79.95./LV. \$34.95. Disney/CED. \$29.98. RCA. Reproduction: A-

Iceman

Color. 1984. Timothy Hutton, Lindsay Crouse, John Lone; dir. Fred Schepisi. 101 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95./LV. \$29.98. MCA/CED. \$19.98. RCA. Reproduction: B+

Both of these intriguing Arctic adventures revolve around a humane young scientist who ultimately opts for ethnic sensibility over clinical science. *Iceman*’s research is farfetched—the discovery of a freeze-dried 40,000-year-old Eskimo who gets thawed out by laser beams—but *Never Cry Wolf* contains a message that’s even more dramatic: nature knows best, but our exploitative society moves ever further away from a compromise with her.

In *Wolf*, Charles Martin Smith (the little nerd from *American Graffiti*) reenacts the true journey of Farley Mowat, who went to the far north to find out why the caribou herds were disappearing—and especially to zero in on the wolves suspected of killing them off. His assignment is to find a wolf, slash open his stomach, and see what’s inside. But Mowat’s procedure is fortunately more wait-and-see, and before long he’s set up camp near a family of wolves who appear to manage quite well without a



thought of the caribou.

The wolves teach him lots of things, and so do the Inuit, North American (as opposed to Asian) Eskimos. Finally the mystery of the caribou is solved, though it turns out it’s a mystery only to the white man—but we get the sneaking suspicion that all Mowat has done is buy time for the wolf. The species is probably as doomed as the beautiful virgin North, and in a complex indictment of humanity—both Indian and Caucasian—we understand Mowat’s disillusionment with science, society, and his own passivity.

Handsomely photographed under trying true-life conditions. *Never Cry Wolf* has the beauty of reality as well as the mysticism of Inuit legend, aided tremendously by the natives who round out Smith’s supporting cast. Evocative and unpretentious, Carroll Ballard’s film has the impact of both documentary and poetry: truth and beauty serving a fascinating journey of the soul.

Iceman has more humans to contend with and seems more contrived, though it too attempts to incorporate Inuit legend. How authentic scientist Shepherd’s revelations are about the Iceman’s “deathwalk” to his destiny I’ll have to leave to anthropologists, but Timothy Hutton’s worried intensity can’t compare to Charlie Smith’s awe and wonder, and some of the philosophical aspects of *Iceman* sound suspiciously like claptrap.

Iceman also has to contend with a decidedly humorless female scientist who is sent into the lab to warm up the wretched, lonely Neanderthal but makes things chillier than ever. I don’t think this is entirely Lindsay Crouse’s fault, but her stern demeanor doesn’t help. Director Fred Schepisi is inconsistent and irritating where point-of-view is concerned; when the Iceman gets loose in the office corridors, he alternates without explanation between subjective and objective camera shots. But John Lone, as the “discovery,” is convincing.

Both transfers come from clean sources, which is a blessing since a dirty print would spoil all that beautiful snow. The sound for *Never Cry Wolf*, which won an Oscar nomination, is often breathtakingly good and Hiro Narita’s photography is stunningly reproduced. The typeface employed for the opening credits is difficult to read, as is the Inuit legend that frames the film, but this is basically a good



job. The MCA cassette of *Iceman* suffers from a slight vertical shimmy and visuals sometimes seem to distort, but this may be Schepisi’s artsy camerawork. Scanning from widescreen is barely noticeable.

—Harvey Elliott

Zardoz

Color. 1974. Sean Connery, Charlotte Rampling, Sara Kestelman; dir. John Boorman. 105 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.98. Key. Reproduction: C+

That John Boorman!—not a terribly subtle guy, but a brilliant and funny one. Count on him to inject bizarre and amusing psycho-socio-political perspective into anything he touches (*Deliverance*, *Excalibur*). In *Zardoz* he creates a loonily funny yet serious meditation on all his favorite topics.

For many *Zardoz* is a bit *too* bizarre. I have no problem with Sean Connery as a loinclothed Brutal who penetrates (get it?) the invisible Vortex from which the sexy but sexless Immortals—second-generation survivors of the now ancient holocaust—run the world in the year 2293. Nor do I worry that most of the Immortals behave like extreme versions of British intellectuals in the year 1973 (get it?) and run the world outside the Vortex as if it were 1984. Some do worry, but plausibility is not this picture’s strong suit and it admits this right off. It’s a quirky, personal, utterly fabulistic picture—more than a little pre-tentious, but mostly what you call good fun, as intended. That everything is not meant to be taken all *that* seriously is clear from the source of the title—something everyone who sees the thing kicks himself for not recognizing from the outset. It’s as deceptively dumb/smart as the movie itself.

Unfortunately, this fine bit of madness has not been done justice on tape. The color, an important consideration in Boorman films, is murky. The all-important final scene has been travestied by incompetent framing of the Cinemascope (where’s a good scan when you need one?) and the credits have been cut off.

—M. George Stevenson

On the Waterfront

B&W. 1954. Marlon Brando, Eva Marie Saint, Rod Steiger, Lee J. Cobb; dir. Elia Kazan. 108 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95./CED. \$19.95. RCA/Columbia. Reproduction: A—

Thirty years ago *On the Waterfront* stunned Hollywood with its gritty realism, social significance, and savage indictment of union corruption. It won eight Oscars including Best Picture in a year in which other nominees included *Three Coins in the Fountain* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. Clearly this was a movie to be taken seriously.

In the years since we have come to realize that Elia Kazan and Budd Schulberg had more at stake than dockworkers' rights—that their portrait of Terry Malloy was not only that of a would-be "contender" who finally becomes a man by walking free of the dirt and dealing that controlled waterfront labor. Their movie and its hero are also an impassioned defense of the informer. Kazan cooperated with the House Un-American Activities Committee. Like Terry Malloy he named names—no doubt with as much torment, courage, and conscience as he and Schulberg invested in their hero. But time has twisted right and wrong around: '50s-style anticommunism now appears to have been less a threat than the witchhunting of the "good guys." Cleaning house takes on more far-reaching moral implications than Terry Malloy's exposure of mob rule. The informers became a different type of mob, excluding the honorable as well as the subversive.

But that's history. Even biographical familiarity with Kazan doesn't blunt the impact of Marlon Brando's angst-ridden performance, the heat of his passion with movie debutante Eva Marie Saint, and the

staccato excitement provided by street-smart screenwriter Schulberg. If *On the Waterfront's* symbolism weren't so heavy and insistent—pigeons everywhere!—it might still be possible to respond to the movie's undeniable social impact the way audiences did in 1954. Though it's too fevered to be corny and too direct to be sentimental, *Waterfront* isn't what it used to be—and neither, thank God, is American politics.

RCA/Columbia's source print showed minor flaws, and at one point early on I detected momentary audio fluctuation, but otherwise Boris Kaufman's legendary

black & white cinematography is well served.

—Harvey Elliott

Passage to Marseilles

B&W. 1944. Humphrey Bogart, Claude Rains, Michelle Morgan, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre; dir. Michael Curtiz. 110 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.98. Key. Reproduction: A—

What do you say about a movie that has a flashback within a flashback within a flashback? I'd say it has script problems, but you just might say confusing or boring. And we'd both be right.

Passage to Marseille, a follow-up to *Casablanca*, employs the same producer, director, and much of the same cast (Bogart, Greenstreet, Lorre, Rains). But where *Casablanca* was witty, suspenseful, and romantic, *Passage* is witless and heavyhanded, with a tepid romance involving Michelle Morgan (no Ingrid Bergman she) and Bogie, who plays a crusading French (!) journalist named Matrac. He spends much of his time machine-gunning Nazis or muttering things like "fascist pigs." Meanwhile Greenstreet, Lorre, and Rains—past masters of the silky *double entendre*—are forced to mouth clunky dialogue that attempts to unravel the tangled tale.

For those who like mindless action, however, *Passage* has its share: you probably won't see as many boat bombings, airplane attacks, fistfights, or prison escapes until the next installment of *The A-Team*. Director Michael Curtiz does his best with the dreadful script (based on a book by the authors of *Mutiny on the Bounty*) and *Citizen Kane's* cinematographer, James Wong Howe, manages some good atmospheric shots (which are seen to good advantage in this crisp reproduction). But on the whole, *Passage* is a journey that



Passage to Marseilles



On the Waterfront

should never have been made.

The movie is reproduced reasonably well, with solid black & white contrast and tones, and sharp sound (which emphasizes the bombastic Max Steiner score).

—Tom Soter

The Last Waltz

Color. 1978. *The Band* (Robbie Robertson, Rick Danko, Richard Manuel, Garth Hudson, Levon Helm), Eric Clapton, Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Emmylou Harris, Van Morrison, the Staples, Dr. John, Muddy Waters, Paul Butterfield, Ronnie Hawkins. 117 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.98. CBS/Fox.

The Band Reunion

Color. 1984. *The Band* (minus Robertson), Cate Bros. 87 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Media.

When the Band "arrived" in 1968, it was a razor-sharp pack of angels possessing a golden link to Bob Dylan at a time when nothing was hipper, buffed to perfection by eight years of touring dives and roadhouses that were flung all over the map. *The Last Waltz*, Martin Scorsese's oily record of the Band's last show (San Francisco, 1976), is a self-consciously grim look at the toll of the second eight years, during which the boys bumped into darn near every bad habit the road had to offer. The message is that you can be God's gift to North America, worthy of a sendoff by every musical heavy in your cosmos, but in the end it wouldn't matter if you'd talked Jesus down off the cross for a chorus of "Old Time Religion" because when you're burned out, boy, you're burned out.

The energy is tremendous as the Band mixes its own classics with those of its luminary guests, but it's the energy of pressure. Scorsese mixes this beautiful music with interview footage and emerges with a stilted (albeit fascinating) look at a group whose shyness of the spotlight makes the glare that much harsher when Scorsese flicks the switch. The weary travelers reminisce in a manner that suggests a combination of shell-shock and medication, and the lasting impression is that life as the Band was so traumatic that the members can't convey how bad it was, *that's* how bad it was. Missing from Scorsese's vision is the sense of *good* camaraderie in a group that spent 16 years together: there's no more love in this film than you'd get from a back-slapping wino. Yet for all the pain and pomp, *The Last Waltz* is riveting and probably the best-looking musical documentary made to date. Color is lush, sound superb, and both are admirably reproduced on VHS. Grit your teeth, enjoy, and be glad it isn't you up there on the screen.

The Band Reunion is a simple nontheatrical video production that easily captures the lightheartedness of the Band's four-fifths of a reunion in 1983. Missing is major forced Robbie Robertson, who opted to stay in Hollywood. His role is filled by the

entirety of the Cate Brothers band (relations of Levon's and his ongoing touring group in the interim years). Though they look a little older, the Band members look a hell of a lot *better* than they did in 1976. Working their way through a collection of Band standards and samples of more recent solo efforts, the musicians seem to be having just a good old time at this decidedly low-pressure gig in Vancouver. The obligatory interview segments are just as fascinating without being as unrelentingly grim. Of particular interest are Danko's fairly abashed account of their encounter with Sonny Boy Williamson and the ugliness it elicited from the local law in the early-'60s South, and Levon's tale of how he bluffed his way into his first drumming job.

Despite fairly bland production values, it's enjoyable for its music alone. Earl Cate doesn't try to imitate Robertson's barbed-wire guitar licks—he goes in the other direction, and Levon and Garth's impromptu rendition of "Don't Start Me Talkin'" is worth the price by itself. If you like the Band as individuals, you'll enjoy this video postcard that comes from the restoration rather than the war memorial.

—John Walker

The Absent-Minded Professor

B&W. 1961. *Fred MacMurray, Nancy Olson, Keenan Wynn, Tommy Kirk; dir. Robert Stevenson.* 96 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95./LV. \$34.95. CED. \$24.95. Disney./CED. \$19.98. RCA. *Reproduction: A* (disc), B— (tape)

Son of Flubber

B&W. 1962. *Fred MacMurray, Nancy Olson, Keenan Wynn, Tommy Kirk; dir. Robert Stevenson.* 105 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Disney. *Reproduction: A*

Follow Me, Boys

Color. 1966. *Fred MacMurray, Vera Miles, Lillian Gish, Kurt Russell; dir. Norman Tokar.* 120 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Disney. *Reproduction: A*

The Happiest Millionaire

Color. 1967. *Fred MacMurray, Greer Garson, Lesley Ann Warren, Geraldine Page; dir. Norman Tokar.* 144 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Disney. *Reproduction: A*—

For nearly a decade Fred MacMurray was Walt Disney's screen alter ego. Friendly, reassuring, and a little peculiar, with a stubborn streak underneath his domesticity that made him sort of a Norman Rockwell non-conformist, MacMurray's movie characters reflected Uncle Walt's own brand of individuality as well as the resourcefulness that allowed him to turn a mouse into an empire. This was not the soft and sentimental Fred MacMurray of TV's *My Three Sons*, but neither was he the despicable Fred in movies like *Double Indemnity* and *The Apartment*. Disney's incarnation of MacMurray was an eccentric American uncle capable of confounding staid institutions like the military, small-town councils, and snobbish high society

with the courage of his sometimes illogical convictions.

In *The Absent-Minded Professor* and *Son of Flubber* he's practically a fool who's missed his own wedding three times—he's tied up in a science lab, inventing an anti-gravity substance for who knows what purpose. In *Follow Me, Boys* MacMurray plays a middle-aged head-in-the-clouds wanderer who's been playing saxophone in a traveling band and arbitrarily decides to settle down in a certain town when the bus passes through one day and he spots a pretty girl. And in *The Happiest Millionaire*, based more or less on the true-life merger of the Duke and Biddle families (and fortunes), he keeps alligators in the conservatory and sponsors a combination Bible class/military preparedness school in the drawing room. He is childlike in his disobedience to the norm. And so was Walt Disney, forging a career out of innocent American fun that never was as apple-pie ordinary as would appear at first glance, though he seemed as mild-mannered and benevolent as—well, an absent-minded professor.

The movies are fun. The Flubber films feature some terrific special-effects, if you're entertained by high-bouncing basketball and football players. *Follow Me, Boys*, mostly about the boy-scout troop MacMurray organizes after he settles down in that town, is graced by warmth and honest sentiment, as well as by Lillian Gish as a feisty town dowager and a kid named Kurt Russell as a bully who's soft and vulnerable underneath. *The Happiest Millionaire*, newly released in a stereo cassette based on the New York roadshow print, is a bit long and unwieldy but some of the Sherman Brothers' score is catchy—they composed for *Mary Poppins* and *The Jungle Book*—and the cast (Greer Garson, Tommy Steele, Lesley Ann Warren, Geraldine Page) has its moments. The opening and closing credits as well as the entire art direction are lovely in evoking early 20th-century Philadelphia, and if the movie seems to end abruptly, that's because there's an even longer version in the Disney archive (159 minutes, the Los Angeles roadshow print) that could be made available if Disney's video people decide to bring it out on disc.

As it is, *Millionaire* is a good transfer with only scattered minor blotches. The techs have done it carefully, even taking the best available sequences from several different prints to make up this composite restoration. *Follow Me, Boys* is lovely and pastoral-looking, and *The Absent-Minded Professor* and *Son of Flubber*—both in black & white probably because the special effects were easier to accomplish that way—are sharp and clear in *Flubber's* cassette and *Professor's* sparkling new LV disc. An earlier cassette release of *Professor* is not recommended, however, because of its washed-out look and slightly squeezed image, which gives the picture a weak and distorted look.

—Harvey Elliott

QUICK TAKES/FILM

I Am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang

B&W. 1932. Paul Muni, Glenda Farrell; dir. Mervyn Le Roy. 76 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Key. Reproduction: B+

Despite its hokey title, this early sound classic is tense and exciting. One of Warner's Depression-era "social protest" films, *I Am a Fugitive* features the great Paul Muni as James Allen, a down-and-outer sentenced to 10 years' hard labor in a Southern chain gang for a petty crime he didn't commit. Allen is innocence betrayed, and the movie makes a telling case against the inequities of a system that allows society's poorest to suffer the most. But the film's drama is not all didactic: there are two thrilling escape sequences and a suspenseful manhunt in which Allen barely avoids capture. Director Mervyn Le Roy (who later produced *The Wizard of Oz*, of all things) opts for a documentary style which effectively builds tension until the downbeat ending. The VHS reproduction is fine for a film this old, with good sound.

—Tom Soter

Adam Had Four Sons

B&W. 1941. Ingrid Bergman, Warner Baxter, Fay Wray; dir. Gregory Ratoff. 81 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. RCA/Columbia. Reproduction: A

One of Ingrid Bergman's more obscure films—and only her second American movie, when Hollywood still didn't know what to do with her—this is a family saga about a European governess who becomes the center of a household of men in a proper New England family after the death of their wife/mother. *Adam Had Four Sons* casts Bergman as a strong, sensible woman who suppresses her love for the patriarch (Warner Baxter) so that the family might survive. Silly plot sometimes—especially when the sons act like idiots about an opportunistic spitfire who marries one and has an affair with the other—but young Susan Hayward (as the tramp) is fiery enough to breathe life into this soap opera, and her scenes opposite Bergman have more zing than the rest of the movie, which is rather proper and costume-laden. The black & white master print used for reproduction is in good condition, and RCA/Columbia's transfer is, as ever, first-rate.

—Harvey Elliott

To Be or Not to Be

Color. 1983. Mel Brooks, Anne Bancroft, Charles Durning, Jose Ferrer; dir. Alan Johnson. 108 min. Beta, VHS. \$79.98./CED. \$19.98. CBS/Fox. Reproduction: A
It takes *chutzpah* to remake Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* (see "Film Clips," June 1984), but since Mel Brooks

and choreographer Alan Johnson did the classic "Springtime for Hitler" bit in *The Producers*, no one's better suited to deflate *der Fuehrer* than this duo. Johnson directs, letting Brooks channel his penchant for excess into his character, a ham actor who gets a chance to play hero in Nazi-occupied Poland. This movie is funny and tasteful, and instead of jokes about breaking wind it delivers stylish high comedy of the sort Brooks and his wife Anne Bancroft make delicious. The opening musical number is "Sweet Georgia Brown," sung by Mr. and Mrs. Brooks in Polish, and it's unforgettable. More sentimental than Lubitsch, and certainly less black, Brooks, Bancroft, and Johnson nonetheless have made a more than respectable showing. The VHS Hi-Fi tape is bright, cheerful, and colorful.

—Harvey Elliott

Police Academy

Color. 1984. Steve Guttenberg, Kim Cattrall; dir. Hugh Wilson. 96 min. Beta, VHS. \$79.95./LV. \$34.98 Warner.

This sloppy excuse for a movie was assembled under the impression that all it takes to make a hit is a bunch of ragtag misfits thrown into an authority struggle with an Establishment that's even more foolish than they are. Plot, motivation, pace, wit, and comic timing don't matter because a formula film like this works on reflexes. But let's put *Animal House* to bed. Let's aim at something a little more sophisticated than laughing at overweight nerds. Let's skip *Police Academy*, because it's already so successful that a sequel is on the way. The VHS tape looks as good as can be expected of a film with no visual style.

—Harvey Elliott

Cross Creek

Color. 1983. Mary Steenburgen, Rip Torn, Peter Coyote; dir. Martin Ritt. 115 min. Beta, VHS. \$79.95. Thorn EMI. Reproduction: B

Marjorie Rawlings had left her husband and New York journalism career to sequester herself in a run-down orange grove in the back country of central Florida, where she wrote her finest works. She was a modest literary figure and this is a modest film. Mary Steenburgen dominates the screen, bringing Rawlings' "journey to maturity" to life with dignity, mischief, and acerbity, bringing disarming warmth to Rawlings' familiar but touching romance



with the land. The film fails to overcome the melodramatic distancing of Rawlings' novels, leaving the suspicion that the memoirist's epiphanies are literary rather than real events—but the richness of Steenburgen's performance chases most of the clouds away. The VHS reproduction doesn't deliver the film's grandiose nature panoramas too well but fares better at close range.

—John Leland

The Dead Zone

Color. 1983. Christopher Walken, Martin Sheen, Herbert Lom; dir. David Cronenberg. 104 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Paramount. Reproduction: A

The Stephen King juggernaut rolls on, combining mildly shocking excitement with characteristic O'Henry irony. Walken plays a car-crash victim who develops psychic powers while in a five-year coma; the film's two big moments have him unmask a local murderer and prognosticate the future madness of a senatorial candidate (Sheen) with presidential ambitions. Special effects are low-key; Walken's character development is far more interesting. The stereo gothic score is the scariest thing about the film.

—Ira Robbins

House of Wax

Color. 1953. Vincent Price, Phyllis Kirk; dir. Andre de Toth. 88 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner. Reproduction: B+

The gimmick in *House of Wax* was 3-D: injected into a basic rehash of *Mystery of the Wax Museum* were fistfights, street entertainers, and can-can dancers who thrust their left hooks, paddleballs, and bouncing fannies into viewers' faces, and it all looks pretty silly on the flat home screen. Still, Vincent Price is classically stylish—camp would come later with *Dr. Phibes*—as the deformed sculptor whose method of sculpture is to cover bodies in wax and let 'em harden. Most promising new face: Charles Bronson (*nee* Buchinski) as Igor, the sculptor's hulking assistant. He grunts convincingly. Apart from a worn (though splice-free) source print and variable Warner color, *House of Wax* looks lively enough as a 2-D period curiosity.

—Harvey Elliott

VIDEO CLIPS

Produced for Home Viewing

1984 Summer Olympics Highlights

Color. 1984. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Continental.

Olympia II

B&W. 1936. 93 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Embassy.

Reviewing a "highlights" tape of this year's Los Angeles Games means reviewing ABC's coverage of the Games. If you liked the way the network approached the quadrennial sports extravaganza, you'll probably enjoy this tape. But I was disappointed with what was shown on television, and with this subsequent condensation.

The tape ranges from dull to inadequate, and I'm probably speaking more for armchair jocks than casual sports observers. A few whines: The Olympics were high on glitz, short on real drama. The Eastern block boycott is hardly mentioned. Too much Mary Lou Retton, not enough archery and other minor sports. How many times can you watch the same vault? Too many oars dipping in the water, too many horses clearing fences. Who cares about rhythmic gymnastics? Why wasn't there any competitive sailing—one of the most popular sports in the nation? The reason, I suspect, is that ABC built up Carl Lewis, Edwin Moses, and the rest of the U.S. contingent to such Promethean heights that it assumed we wouldn't be interested in foreign athletes' performances in esoteric sports. Lewis, who probably does deserve the footage, gets only about half a minute for his four-gold-medal blitz.

Mostly, you'll come away with memories of Frank Gifford's blase voiceover and too many moments of indulgent pathos. Me? I'll remember the *Highlights* for the wasted footage of the opening and closing ceremonies. The 1984 Games could be called the Hollywood Olympics, where Lionel Richie played "All Night Long" too long at the closing ceremonies. What a bore.

The 1936 Berlin Games makes for a gratifying contrast. The tape was produced by Nazi sympathist Leni Riefenstahl, the filmmaker best known for *Triumph of the Will* and other Third Reich propaganda vehicles. Much of the documentary footage resurrected from these Olympics focuses on Hitler, Jesse Owens (though not in this second of two volumes), and the German quest for "Aryan" supremacy.

Surprisingly, there is little German propaganda in this tape—especially compared with the U.S. nationalism hyped in the 1984 tape. Riefenstahl concentrates on the athlete himself and how sports and art come thrillingly close when world-class competitors meet. It's in black & white, but you'll barely notice or care. Slow motion is used lavishly and shots are framed from angles that remind you of the shadows and angles in Fritz Lang and Orson Welles movies of the period. Voiceover is minimal, and the classical score appropriate. When racing sculls are in action, the camera is on strained faces and muscle sinew. High divers are framed from below the diving board. A string of equestrians are shown falling off their horses! Yes, humor and failure are part of sport. The Indian field-hockey team, the best in the world at the time, is actually shown cleaning the Germans' clocks in the gold-medal round.

Save for an occasional Nazi salute, you'd never guess the Games were in Berlin. Riefenstahl's effort is nothing short of brilliant when you consider she didn't have ABC's hundreds of cameras and technicians to shoot millions of feet of videotape. Both tapes have excellent production values. The 1936 tape has occasional scratches from the original film, but it looks no worse than any revival-house classic.

—Doug Garr

Rock and Roll: The Early Days

Color, B&W. 1984. Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, others. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.



Rock and Roll: The Early Days

Patrick Montgomery, director and coproducer of *The Compleat Beatles*, has joined with cowriter and producer Pamela Page to score with a solid documentary detailing rock's explosion in the '50s. Although their style is a little dry (the narration is geared to the viewer unfamiliar with the subject, which no potential purchaser of *The Early Days* is likely to be), Montgomery and Page manage to tell the story in a coherent, meaningful fashion. The wealth of footage is *The Early Days'* strongest point, overcoming occasional errors in fact or judgment.

Throughout the tape the conflict between rock's inherently subversive instincts and the straitlaced, segregated mood of the Eisenhower years is implicit. Montgomery throws in a clip from a curious interview show, *Hy Gardner Calling*, where host Gardner telephones Elvis and the viewer sees a split-screen shot of the exchange. Like most figures of "authority," Gardner took delight in baiting a rocker like Presley (questions like "What about the rumor that you shot your mother?" are heard on bootleg transcriptions of the entire segment). Montgomery's selection is of Gardner asking Elvis if he's taken criticism directed his way to heart. "No, sir, I haven't learned anything from [it] 'cause I don't think I'm doing anything wrong." Such a statement lets us see how natural and deeply felt the urge to rock was among its practitioners and followers, and also says much about youth and rock since that time.

With moments like this, *The Early Days* proves a valuable study of an era which continues to fascinate and influence us.

—Wayne King

The Guy Lombardo Program 1955—Volume 107

B&W. 1984. Guy Lombardo, Buddy Brennan. 54 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95 plus \$3.50 s&h. *Swingtime Video* (Box 3476, Hollywood, Cal. 90078/orders—800-772-1234; information—213-463-2124).

Tuning into the New York City pickup of Guy Lombardo, to ring out the old and ring in the new to the strains of "Auld Lang Syne," was always something we just did. This compilation has been assembled from 1955 film segments of a parade of hits picked from the hundreds he introduced and recorded during some 40 years, 33 of them at New York's Roosevelt Grill. Lombardo's 14-man orchestra delivers 54 minutes of that straightforward, melodic

style in a supper-club setting. Part of Swingtime Video's "Meet the Band Leaders" series, this program is all Lombardo—no MC, no interviews, no fluff.

After the opening "Auld Lang Syne" theme and an upbeat "Sioux City Sue," Lombardo's lead vocalist Kenny Gardner follows with "I Need You Now," one chorus taken by Jeff Stroughton's 'bone obligato, and "That Old Gang of Mine." Next Bill Flannigan sings a very reverent "Now Is the Hour." The tempo perks up with "Roaming in the Gloaming," played on Lombardo's trademark twin pianos by Buddy Brennan and Fred Kreitzer. They return at a later point for Lombardo's unique "Humoresque," demanded by audiences whenever he played. Gardner sings a nice turn on "Frankie and Johnny" with a roll of the eyes. I especially liked "St. Louis Blues" in which Guy sings and brother Carmen holds a 26-second sustained sax note. Everyone joins in to sing some choruses we haven't heard for a long time: "49 Women," "Let Me Be Your Little Dog," and "Like My Peaches." The tape finishes with four characteristically Lombardo songs written and performed by Carmen (a better writer than a singer) and others: "Boo Hoo," "Cocquette," "Powder Your Face with Sunshine," and the closer, "Good Night, Good Luck and God Bless You" (Gardner).

The 30-year-old soundtrack will knock your socks off. Instruments and vocals are clear and distinct and as well reproduced as any fixed-head mono track I have ever heard. Expect nothing less since Swingtime is run by engineer extraordinaire Wally Heider, who for years owned one of the largest sound studios in Hollywood and who has 98 vintage big-band Hindsight LPs to his credit. Reproduction is excellent and the cassette comes in a hard case with detailed information. Heider also includes, while supplies last, an informative nine-page booklet written by musicologist Dave Dexter, covering his entire series and devoting a full page to Lombardo.

Now you know what I'll be doing when the clock strikes 12 this New Year's Eve.

—Ken Winslow

Lucia di Lammermoor

Color. 1984. Joan Sutherland, Alfredo Kraus, Pablo Elvira, Ariel Bybee; con. Richard Boyce. Music by Donizetti. 128 min. LV. \$49.95. Pioneer.

With another in its series of beautifully engineered and transferred *Live from the Met* productions on LV disc, having all the quality stereo sound and video that implies, Pioneer would seem to have a winner: Joan Sutherland doing one of her most famous roles, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. And if you like *Lucia*, Joan, and pre-John Dexter Met productions, that's the truth. If you don't, watch out—for this is an apotheosis of all the above.

Donizetti did write some of his best stuff for *Lucia* and the plot demands of this most

absurd Gothic tale are the reason. To begin with, he had the "Mad Scene"—Lucia, having forsaken her lover and married the man her brother insisted she marry, kills the groom in the bridal chamber and comes out to tell the horrified wedding party the details. This scene was so popular it was often done as an encore by earlier sopranos no matter what opera they happened to be doing that night. It's still wild and wooly, particularly as performed by Sutherland, and great fun. The sextet, another oft-excerpted set piece, is also lovely; Joan combines with her favorite tenor Alfredo Kraus and others for a dramatically correct and well-balanced rendering. Even the not-famous music the various characters sing, as they march through the condensed yet still overblown paces of Walter Scott's tale, is fine and often terrific.

For me, however, it's too much on TV. I know most opera is silly, but this is among the silliest, and so artificial that even the love duets have difficulty wringing out the proper emotions. Couple this with one of the Met's most misguidedly literal productions, and tripled with having to believe the 50-plus-year-old woman in closeup is the 18-year-old bride the subtitles say she is—however well she sings—it's all too much. From my seat in the opera house I can go for this kind of thing; in my living-room it just doesn't look right even in bright stereo sound and technically brilliant color. *Lucia* will never be *Lucy*, and neither looks right in the other's place.

—M. George Stevenson

The Rolling Stones: Video Rewind

Color. Compiled 1984. Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Bill Wyman, Charlie Watts, Mick Taylor, Ron Wood, others. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Vestron.

Goodness, are Mick, Keith, Ronnie, Bill, and Charlie still hanging in after all these years? Is "Midnight Rambler" 15 years old already? The Stones, looking a bit haggard but sounding punchy as ever, are no strangers to the voyeuristic aspects of rock & roll.

And they're infatuated with the tube—much of this tape has a TV somewhere in the frame. In more than one scene the band dumps a TV out the window, surely the fulfillment of rocker fantasy. They undress a woman in an airplane and toss her about, and just when your morals are just about to be damaged, you chuckle and realize that, yes, of course, it's a joke. A kneepadded Jagger still chicken-struts across the world's stages, probably not more than a step slower than in his prime. The dangling cigarette is as much a part of Keith Richards as is his guitar, and the band maintains its sense of humor even through the mock interviews. When the band is asked about their drug problems, they deadpan that it's the police they have problems with, not drugs.

This isn't great rock video because



The Rolling Stones:
Video Rewind

there's nothing profoundly creative, despite Julien Temple's new inter-clip footage of Bill Wyman as a museum curator and Mick as a glass-enclosed exhibit. Some black & white sits among the color, and a couple of songs are obviously lip-synced, which is the only time you feel short-changed. Mick in bed, Mick on stage—well, a bit of Mick just about everywhere. I'd rather be bored by the Rolling Stones than most rock bands. But still, this tape's quite good, and except for some old concert footage production values are first-class. If you're observant you'll note a guest shot by the late Keith Moon. If you don't know that he played drums before Charlie Watts, you're probably under 25.

Some 14 songs are played partly or wholly, and my own prejudices run toward "Miss You," "Brown Sugar," "Emotional Rescue," and "She's So Cold." I hope they do another one of these when they're all over 50.

—Doug Garr

Madeleine Kamman Cooks

Color. 1984. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$89.95. Baffico/Breger Video (915 B'way, N.Y.C. 10010; 212-254-3900).

The Slim Gourmet

Color. 1984. Barbara Gibbons, McLean Stevenson. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Media.

Wine Sips

Color. 1984. Anita LaRaia. 40 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Wine Sips Video (Box 52723, Atlanta, Ga. 30355; 404-662-6585).

Don't just preheat your oven. Warm up your VCR! Drop in a tape and out pops a bunch of tasty recipes. These new cooking tapes have something for every taste.

Madeleine Kamman runs her video kitchen the old-fashioned way: slightly doty. You have to be flaky (Graham Kerr), whimsical (Julia Child), or delirious (Robert Morley) to hash out an hourly cooking show. Kamman talks like a 78 RPM

Jacques Cousteau: fast, precise, and amusing. "This poor fellow!" she exclaims as she performs a culinary autopsy on a duck, lopping off wings and tail, peeling back skin, slashing fat, slicing membrane. Along the way you get fun tips on the best way to chop garlic and not fingers, an easy way to get a nice crumbly salad topping (smash an egg through a strainer), and how lime juice keeps an avocado from turning brown. The only problem for some is that her recipes are rich (duck in cocoa sauce) and expensive (one tape is all duck and shrimp). You also need time (one recipe took 40 minutes just to explain). But if you're a true artist of the kitchen you'll enjoy this, and you'll also agree that only black plates can do justice to the sight of a shrimp and avocado salad.

For harned chefs who want something quick that won't thin the wallet or bulge the belly, there's *The Slim Gourmet* with Barbara Gibbons and weighty McLean Stevenson as housewife helper. Here's a solid value, a no-nonsense guide through over 30 recipes: pot roasts, veal, turkey, lasagna, filet of sole, salads, even low-fat chili. There's no fat on this tape. Recipes are explained in several steps. It's quick but easy to follow (you can always replay anyway) and you do see the basics of how to prepare and arrange the food. Then Barbara and McLean ooh and aah over the finished dish. They even tell you what each dish "costs" in calories. The only negative is that each segment is prefaced by a cloying theme song sung by a girl whose high C could curdle milk.

After dinner? Put on a wine cassette. Smell the elegant bouquet of TDK '83. Or do you prefer a Fuji from the sunny side of the factory? *Wine Sips* is a solid beginner's course for those who want to play the wine-tasting game. You won't look like a fool in front of a snide wine steward in a restaurant after viewing this tape. Anita LaRaia tells you which brands are best and which go with lobster, veal, even barbecued hamburger (Inglenook Zinfandel). Two very useful booklets are enclosed. One, listing Anitas' choices, you can take to the store. The other has information on storing, chilling, and serving wine. The booklets are as informative as the tape though visually there's not much to see. The woman ticks off brand names and offers some capsule comments on the differences between types of wine while the camera pans over each bottle. It's a stolid low-budget production—but perhaps that's because she spent all her money on wine. Who knows? After watching this, you might too.

—Ron Smith

8 Minute Makeovers

Color. 1984. Clare Miller. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$34.95 (w/book,) \$24.95 (w/o book). Kartes Video Communications (10 E. 106 St., Indianapolis, Ind. 46280; 317-844-7403).

The title will be a little misleading to an avid reader of women's magazines, to

whom "makeover" means a more sweeping change of appearance than just makeup—even a "totally new concept in makeup." Clare Miller, author of the original book and narrator/demonstrator of the video, has narrowed the file down to four "images" borrowed from the fashion industry: classic, earthy, romantic, and glamorous. It will not come as any great news to most women that looking "glamorous" requires more makeup than looking "classic." However, many may be surprised to find out that the classic face is useful "if you need to look trustworthy or successful," or that the earthy natural look takes as much time to acquire as trendy glamor.

8 Minute Makeovers is presented in a talk-show format with Ms. Miller demonstrating her magic on two models, a blonde who illustrates earthiness and glamor, and a brunette who brings classicism and romanticism. (There may be a message here somewhere.) Each type of makeup is demonstrated twice, once as a "fast face" and once as a "model face." The first gets you out the door in the morning with a minimum of fuss, and the second takes—and lasts—longer. The video comes with Miller's book and she refers to page numbers for each "face." The book also covers problems such as choosing the right makeup colors and contouring to correct flaws, which are omitted from the video. The virtue of a video/book tie-in is that you can see exactly how the makeup tools are used to achieve a particular effect. No matter how detailed text and illustrations may be, they can still be difficult to translate into action. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but a moving picture is worth volumes.

Few women over the age of 13 will come to *8 Minute Makeovers* with no knowledge of makeup procedures, but you only have to look at faces on the street to know that applying makeup well is not an innate talent. Miller, while taking the subject somewhat too seriously, presents a clear demonstration of techniques and offers good advice about suiting makeup to specific situations and clothing styles. This is a good how-to for adolescents just beginning to paint their faces, since all the styles are understated and attractive.

(They can always move on to green hair and glitter once they've mastered the basics.) It is also a useful tool for women who want to change their "look." If nothing else, you'll finally find out what those tiny overpriced sponges are for.

—Louise Kohl

Hepburn and Tracy

Color, B&W. Compiled 1984. 45 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. RKO.

The late Spencer Tracy probably wouldn't have liked the billing of *Hepburn and Tracy*, but then again he wouldn't have liked much else about it either. How could a program that pretends to be about this unlikely but perfect screen partnership manage to include photo montages, film clips, commentary—everything except Tracy and Hepburn? (sorry, Hepburn and Tracy). There's not one scene from their great films (*Adam's Rib*, *Woman of the Year*, *Pat and Mike*). Instead we get a scene from *State of the Union* in which the two hardly get to interact, another from their so-so *Desk Set*, which narrator Kevin McCarthy announces was "unforgettable," and one from their last film together, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*.

Something went awry here (maybe film rights). The individual bios of the two stars are well-handled with stills and newsreel footage that tell their stories swiftly, but the selection of their individual career highlights is distressing, leaving out both stars' major triumphs (Kate's *Philadelphia Story* and Spence's *Captains Courageous* and *Boys Town*) and often leaving their costars unidentified. And when it comes to that fabled combination (the longest-running male/female team in Hollywood history), there's precious little insight beyond observations like "Opposites attract, and for a man and a woman to love each other, they need not be cut from the same cloth." True—but for me to love a documentary about two of my favorite movie stars, it needs to be cut from cloth without holes.

Some of the old footage—like Tracy in John Ford's *Up the River*—is so old and damaged it should be sent there, but the color stuff looks crisp. Elsewhere it's hard to complain about what's in this video memento. It's what's left out that hurts.

—Michael Musto



QUICK TAKES/VIDEO

A B.C. Christmas

Color. 1984. Animated; created by Johnny Hart; voices by Bob Elliot and Ray Goulding. 30 min. Beta, VHS. \$24.95. Embassy.

Some comic strips, such as *Peanuts*, translate well into video; a great many more come off awkward and unfunny on the small screen. The hip cavemen, snakes, ants, and dinosaurs of *B.C.* fit the latter description in what is another trite holiday-season story of how people discovered the wonderful spirit of giving. Even the incomparable voices of Bob & Ray can't save this Yuletide turkey. Just the thing for getting Grandma to doze off in front of the fire, though. —Kevin Baker

Less Stress in 5 Easy Steps

Color. 1984. Ed Asner; created by Dr. David Gross. 45 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Video Associates (5419 Sunset Blvd., L.A., Cal. 90027; 213-463-3255).

Yes, the man who created all those stomach ulcers around the old WJM newsroom is back telling us how to get rid of stress, in any number of trite and obvious ways. The elfin Asner bounces merrily about the low-budget set, aided in his simplistic demonstrations of muscle-relaxing and silent-scream techniques by a long-legged girl in tights and, unfortunately, a mime. This video is complete with a "music video meditation" section that features elevator music and nice shots of trees, sunsets, and fish. Stressful situations shown include an argument in executive offices, a fender bender, and a malfunctioning TV. Not recommended for people with actual problems. —Kevin Baker

Jane Fonda's Prime Time Workout

Color. 1984. 53 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Karl.

Old *Barbarella* never died, she's just going for the burn. Once again Jane Fonda sets out after fitness—this time for senior-citizen initiates—along with a supporting cast of female exercisers so studiously mixed by ethnic group, age, color, and shape as to include a man. Jane's exercises look vigorous and effective, and they certainly are serious. She makes a couple of attempts at humorous asides, but never comes close to the unintentionally classic line, "I assume most of you don't have a ballet bar in your home." —Kevin Baker



The Video SAT Review

Color. 1983. 120 min. Beta, VHS. \$89.95. Dial Productions (12077 Wilshire, Suite 614, Los Angeles, Cal. 90025; 213-456-6980).

The makers of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) have always asserted it's a "pure" measure of scholarly ability, and that cramming won't improve a student's score. Maybe. But study, repetition, and close familiarity with the kinds of questions asked will improve performance on just about any test, and this tape provides helpful explanations of how to approach oft-asked verbal and math questions, along with a complete sample SAT. More importantly, the package of tape and booklets offers useful advice on test-taking strategy: when to guess and when to skip a question; anxiety reduction, relaxation, and focusing techniques. It is not a substitute for hard work or ability. But as a backup or alternative to expensive SAT prep courses—it couldn't hurt. —Richard Jaccoma

Videotrivia

Color. 1984. 60 min. Beta, VHS. Best Films & Video (98 Cutter Mill Rd., Great Neck, N.Y. 11021; 516-487-4515).

Throwing a party for illiterates? If they can't read "Trivial Pursuit" cards, rent this tape instead: 50 questions that are educational ("How many sides to a snowflake?"), unusual ("Name the two baseball teams without names ending in S"), corny ("Name the Seven Dwarfs"), and downright—well, trivial ("Name the four Lennon Sisters"). Each one's repeated twice and flashed on the screen three times with a suitable photo. You get 30 seconds (and redundant ticktock music) to answer. It's not much visually, but the announcer plays it straight and it should be diverting fun for average triviaists. —Ron Smith

In Our Hands

Color. 1982. Pete Seeger, Peter Paul & Mary. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Continental.

June 12, 1982: a million people gather in Central Park to protest nuclear war. And here's the documentary: 10 minutes of now-elderly folkies singing, and 80 minutes of harrowing Hiroshima photos, tearful remembrances, depressing speeches, exhilarating crowd euphoria, anxiety-producing interviews, uplifting "we can change the world" camaraderie, and the inevitable "out of the mouths of babes" kiddie quips. It's a long, aching exercise that tries to balance despair and nightmare against the optimism of united protest. It's tough viewing, but potent in its urgent call for a solution. —Ron Smith

The Cars: Heartbeat City

Color. Compiled 1984. 48 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.98. Warner.

Heartbeat City is a compilation of eight Cars video clips. Each was handled by a different director including Andy Warhol, Timothy Hutton, Devo's Gerry Casale, and Jeff Stein—who worked with special-effects firm Charlex on "You Might Think," picked by MTV as its "Video of the Year"—but there are a few constants. The Cars are as guilty of treating women as objects as the lowliest heavy-metal band, and the storylines of most of the clips are unfathomable. Head gasket Ric Ocasek says in the tagged-on "Making of 'Hello Again'" that he "likes videos which don't depict the songs' meanings." Since the Cars' songs don't make a lot of sense in the first place, the combination leaves *Heartbeat City* a vehicle ready for the scrap heap. —Wayne King

Thompson Twins: Sidekicks

Color. 1983. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Thorn EMI.

Go ahead. Bring the Thompson Twins into your home. They're sure to mind their manners—or at least their mannerisms. This British haircut band poses its way through a long hour of its best material. But for a cool medium band like the Thompson Twins, a live video may have been a mistake: it limits their visuals, and they do not have the emotional charge to rock it, so they come off cold. None of their patented perkiness makes it onto tape, and their least-common-denominator formulas weigh heavily as the set wears on. TT is constitutionally a singles band—best in a hit-it-and-split format, not ready yet for the long haul. —John Leland

DIRECTORY

New Releases on Tape and Disc

January spells "Super Bowl," and to get you and yours up for the game we recommend three 25-year highlight tapes in this month's Sports "Directory" for the Dallas Cowboys, San Diego Chargers, and New York Jets. For added fun take a look at Unicorn Video's *The Black Six*, which features six out-of-uniform pro stars taking the parts of bikers touring the country for some post-Vietnam R&R.

As a token of the now-concluded Presidential election, Trans World Entertainment's very funny *And If I'm Elected* review of past campaign styles and promises by the Smothers Brothers will put the whole thing in proper perspective. Keep the smiles coming with Paramount's *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad*, Warner's *Start the Revolution Without Me*, and more Benny Hill from Thorn EMI.

Looking for vintage drama? You'll find an early Katharine Hepburn in RKO Home Video's 1934 *The Little Minister* and an even earlier Walter Huston in RCA/Columbia's 1931 *The Criminal Code*. A youthful Ronald Reagan pops up in Key

Video's *Kings Row* and in U.S.A. Home Video's three-episode compilation *Death Valley Days*. Not to be missed is Barbara Stanwyck's 1948 *Sorry, Wrong Number* from Paramount. Loyal subjects of Stephen King might want to see one of his videoized stories, *The Woman in the Room*, from Native Son International.

Compilations of powerhouse performances of the likes of Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, the Beatles, and other internationally famous artists were the stock and trade of some of the first video companies under sometimes disputed technical and legal circumstances. Now is your chance to get a first-rate copy of those Judy Garland CBS TV shows issued by RKO Home Video. Vol. 2 of *The Playboy Jazz Festival*, offered in Hi-Fi in both Beta and VHS by RCA/Columbia, is every bit as good if not better than the first. For some culture, don't miss MGM/UA's animated classic, *The Soldier's Tale*, and *The Ultimate Swan Lake* from who else but Kultur. For this month's Video Collector, we bring Lauren Bacall—with and without Bogart.

ADVENTURE

The Assignment. Color. Lung Tien Hsian, Chen Sha Lih, Chen Tien Tai. Vagabond is beaten, left for dead. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

The Big Bowl. Color. 1980. Jackie Chan. Karate combat among 1930s Chicago mobsters. 95 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

The Block Six. Color. Joe Green, Gene Washington, Mercury Morris, Willie Lanier. Black bikers cycling after duty in Vietnam. 91 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Unicorn.

Block Belt Jones. Color. 1974. Jim Kelly. Avenger takes on mobsters trying to muscle in on local karate school. 87 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

The Bounty. Color. 1984. Mel Gibson, Anthony Hopkins, Laurence Olivier. Disastrous voyage of HMS Bounty ends in mutiny. 130 min. (PG) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$79.95. Vestron.

Boxer's Adventure. Color. Ling Yun, Wei Tzu-yun, Pai Ying, Yen Nanh-hsi. Beggar enlists in a war, proves to be a courageous fighter. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

Brody's Escape. Color. 1984. John



Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes

Savage, Kelly Reno. WWII American pilot shot down over Nazi-occupied Hungary. 92 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. VidAmerica.

The Brother. Color. Chen Hsing, Jeanette Yu, Kao Yung. Exhibition of fighting skills. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

Bruce Lee: A Dragon Story. Color. Bruce Li, Na Yin Hsiu, Tang Pei. Rise and glory of kung-fu hero. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

Canonball Run II. Color. 1984. Burt Reynolds, Dom DeLuise, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Jamie Farr,

Marilu Henner, Telly Savalas, Shirley MacLaine, Susan Anton, Joe Theismann, Frank Sinatra. Cross-country car race with an Arab fortune, bogus nuns, assorted crazies. 109 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$79.95./LV (closed captions). \$34.98. Warner.

Cubo. Color. Jack Weston, Hector Elizondo, Denholm Elliott, Martin Balsam, Chris Sarandon, Alejandro Rey, Lonnelle McKee. The turmoil, intrigue of the Batista regime's final weeks in power. 122 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.98. Key.

Deadline. Color. 1981. Barry Newman, Trisha Noble, Bill Kerr. Story of government threatened with nuclear blackmail. 94 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Worldvision.

Death Driver. Color. 1978. Earl Owensby, Mike Allen. Former stunt-driving champ will do anything to make a comeback. 93 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Thorn EMI.

The Devil Thumbs a Ride/Hov-ing a Wonderful Crime. B/W. 1947/1945. *Devil:* Lawrence Tierney, George Murphy, Carole Landis. Killer on the run hitches a ride. *Having:* Pat O'Brien, George Murphy, Carole Landis. Lawyer hooked into solving a murder. 132 min. Beta, VHS. \$34.95. RKO.

The Dirty Dozen. Color. 1967. Lee Marvin, Ernest Borgnine, Jim Brown, John Cassavetes, Robert Ryan, Charles Bronson, Donald Sutherland, Richard Jaeckel, George Kennedy, Trini Lopez, Ralph Meeker, Telly Savalas, Clint Walker, Robert Webber. Army strike force of criminals takes on difficult combat mission. 149 min. LV (stereo). \$39.95. MGM/UA.

Dressed to Fight. Color. Tien Peng, Ling Yun, Lung Chun-em. Mighty knight rescues beautiful girl. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

Floshpoint Africo. Color. Trevor Howard, Gayle Hunnicutt, James



King Kong

Faulkner. News team caught in terrorist raid. 99 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. VCL.

For the Love of Benji. Color. 1977. Benji, Cynthia Smith, Allen Fiazat, Patsy Garrett, Ed Nelson. CED. \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

Fortress of the Red Dragon. Yun Chung Yuh, Ma Ru Fong, Lu I-Lung. Death duel between ruthless Japanese invaders, local Taiwanese. Beta, VHS. Sun.

From Hell to Victory. Color. George Peppard, George Hamilton, Horst Bucholz, Anny Duprey, Sam Wanamaker, Jean Pierre Cassel, Capucine. Six friends fight in WWII. 100 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Media.

Gone in 60 Seconds. Color. H.B. Halicki, Marion Busia, George Cole, James McIntyre, Jerry Daugirda. Professional car thief smashes 93 cars. 97 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Media.

The Great Escape from Women's Prison. Color. Dae Keun Lee, Ko Chang, Mi Ra Yun, Keum Bong Do. Woman's attempt to escape Japanese prison camp. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes. Color. 1984. Christopher Lambert, Ralph Richardson, Ian Holm, James Fox, Andie MacDowell. Saga of Lord John Clayton, Earl of Greystoke, from orphaned infancy in Africa to Scottish homecoming. 130 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). \$79.95./LV (stereo, CX, Dolby MP matrix, closed captions). \$39.98. Warner.

The Gumboll Rolly. Color. 1976. Michael Sarrazin, Gary Busey. Road race from Times Sq. to Pacific Ocean. 107 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

Hot Dog...The Movie. Color. Shannon Tweed, Patrick Houser, David Naughton. Temptress out to win the heart of champion skier. 95 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$79.98. Key.

The Invincible Six. Color. Stuart Whitman, Elke Sommer. Caper to steal the Crown Jewels of Iran. 94 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Continental.

King Kong. Color. 1977. Jeff Bridges, Jessica Lange, Charles Grodin. Giant ape tamed by lovely lady. 135 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$39.95 (reissue). Paramount.

Kung Fu. Color. 1971. David Carradine, Barry Sullivan, Keith Carradine, Philip Ahn, Keye Luke. Buddhist monk wanders American West fighting injustice. 75 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

Love's Savage Fury. Color. 1979. Jennifer O'Neill, Perry King, Robert Reed, Raymond Burr. Two escapees from Union prison camp seek treasure. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Prism.

Never Cry Wolf. Color. 1983. Charles Martin Smith, Brian Dennehy. Biologist sent to Arctic wilderness to study wolves. 105 min. (PG) Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$79.95./LV (stereo). \$34.95. Disney.

The Odessa File. Color. Jon Voight, Maximilian Schell. German journalist searches for former Nazi SS officer and concentration-camp butcher. 128 min. (PG) Beta (Hi-Fi, closed captions). VHS (closed captions). \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

One Away. Color. 1976. Bradford

Dillman, Elke Sommer, Dean Stockwell. Escape from South African labor camp, manhunt across African veld. 83 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Monterey.

Queen of Diamonds. Color. 1972. Claudia Cardinale, Stanley Baker, Henri Charrière. Cross and double-cross in diamond robbery. 105 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Monterey.

The Shoolin Drunken Monk. Color. Lau Ka-fai, Chin Yuen-san, Wong Yat-tso. Kung Fu expert fights to rid his town of evil. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

Steel Fisted Dragon. Color. 1982. Steve Lee, Johnny KongKong, Peter Chan. Son's fight to revenge slaying of mother. 85 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$69.96. Thorn EMI.

Stories and Fables—Volume 7. Color. 1981. *Clever Manka*: Judge discovers wife is challenging decisions. *The Russian and the Tartar*: Travelers trick each other. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Disney.

Stories and Fables—Volume 8. Color. 1981. *The Straw Hat*: Youths rob disabled person. *Moses and the Lime Kiln*: Friendship of two wise men shattered. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Disney.

Surfacing. Color. Joseph Bottoms, Kathleen Beller. Kate, her city-bred companions, search Northern wilderness for missing father. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. VCL.

Tough Guy. Color. Chang Lie, Yu Young, Chen Hsing. Tale of spy and counterspy. Beta, VHS. Ocean.

The Train. B&W. 1965. Burt Lancaster, Paul Scofield, Jeanne Moreau, Michel Simon. Railway inspector, French Resistance divert cargo of valuable paintings from reaching German border. 132 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.98. Key.

Vivo Knievell! Color. 1977. Evel Knievel, Lauren Hutton, Frank Gif-

ford, Red Buttons. Chasing drug smugglers. 106 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

The Wild Bunch of Kung Fu. Simon Yuen, Fong Jun, Tao Min Ming. Old man shows young men what courage is all about. Features "Crane" style Kung Fu fighting. Beta, VHS. Sun.

The Yokuzo. (AKA *Brotherhood of the Yakuza*.) Color. 1975. Robert Mitchum, Takakura Ken, Brian Keith, Herb Edelman, Richard Jordan, Kishi Keiko. American ex-cop confronts secret Samurai-styled Japanese Mafia. 112 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

COMEDY



And If I'm Elected. Color. 1984. Political humor from the Smothers Brothers. 53 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. TWE.

The Best of the Benny Hill Show, Volume 4. Color. The British comic. 95 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Thorn EMI.

Freebie and the Beon. Color. 1974. James Caan, Alan Arkin, Valerie Harper, Loretta Swit, Jack Kruschen, Mike Kellin, Alex Rocco. Klutzy cops nail numbers racketeer. 114 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

Inserts. Color. 1976. Richard Dreyfuss, Jessica Harper, Bob Hoskins, Veronica Cartwright, Stephen Davies. Film director's popularity fades as silent film gives way to sound. 117 min. (X) Beta, VHS. \$59.98. Key.

Moscow on the Hudson. Color. Robin Williams, Maria Conchita Alonso, Cleavant Derricks, Alejandro Rey. Russian saxophone player defects in Bloomingdale's. 115 min. (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi, closed captions). \$79.95./CED. RCA/Columbia.

Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Momo's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sod. Color. 1967. Rosalind Russell, Robert Morse, Barbara Harris, Hugh Griffin, Jonathan Winters, Lionel Jeffries, Cyril Delevanti. Widow vacations with coffin containing late husband. 86 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Paramount.

Oh, Heavenly Dog. Color. Chevy Chase, Benji. Private investigator reincarnated as famous canine Benji. 104 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions).



Kung Fu

\$39.98 CBS/Fox.

Police Academy. Color. 1984. Steve Guttenberg, Kim Cattrall, G.W. Bailey, Bubba Smith, George Gaynes. What happens when anybody can join the police dept. 96 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$79.95/LV. \$34.98. Warner.



Reuben, Reuben. Color. Tom Conti, Kelly McGillis. Satirical glimpse into pseudo-intellectual suburbia. 100 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$59.98. CBS/Fox.

The Shop on Main Street. B&W. 1965. Hana Slivkova, Josef Kroner. Funny, touching relationship between elderly Jewish shopkeeper, her Nazi-appointed controller. 128 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (both Czechoslovakian, English subtitles). \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Soggy Bottom USA. Color. 1984. Ann Wedgeworth, Lois Nettleton, Anthony Zerbe, Ben Johnson, Dub Taylor. Illegal still lands pair in hot water. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Prism.

Start the Revolution Without Me. Color. 1970. Gene Wilder, Donald Sutherland, Billie Whitelaw, Hugh Griffith, Jack MacGowan, Victor Spinetti, Ewa Aulin, Orson Welles. Two sets of mismatched twins cross paths during French Revolution. 91 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

The Three Stooges, Volume X. B&W. Moe, Larry & Curly in three shorts: *Spook Louder*, *Men in Black*, *If a Body Meets a Body*. 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (both closed captions). \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Where the Boys Are '84. Color. Lisa Hartman, Lorna Luft, Wendy

Schall, Lynn Holly Johnson, Alana Stewart. Exploits of Northern college girls during spring break. 95 min. (R) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$79.98. Key.

DRAMA

Blood and Black Lace. Color. Cameron Mitchell, Eva Bartok, Mary Arden. Racy world of gorgeous models, elite designers touched by grisly murders. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Media.

Breakheart Pass. Color. 1976. Charles Bronson, Jill Ireland, Charles Durning, Robert Crenna, Ben Johnson. Secret agent stops robbers from stealing govt. gold. 95 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$59.98. Key.

Cormen. Color. 1983. Antonio Gades, Laura Del Sol, Paco De Lucia, Cristina Hoyos, Juan Antonio Jimenez, Sebastian Moreno. Modern-dance director finds lead dancer. 99 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Media.

The Criminal Code. B&W. 1931. Walter Houston, Phillips Holmes, Constance Cummings, Boris Karloff. Young man jailed. 98 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS (both closed captions). \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Death Volley Boys. Color, B&W. 1957-67. Ronald Reagan, Robert Taylor, Clint Eastwood. Three episodes from the TV series: *Halo for a Bad Man*, *No Gun Behind This Badge*, *The Last Letter*. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. U.S.A.

Double Deal. Color. Louis Jourdan, Angela Punch-McGregor. Wife caught in plot to steal husband's opal. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. VCL.

Foke Out. Color. 1982. Telly Savalas, Desi Arnaz Jr., Pia Zadora. Up-and-coming nightclub singer caught between mob, police. 89 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Thorn EMI.

The Greatest. Color. 1977. Muhammad Ali, Ernest Borgnine. Ali's career. 100 min. (PG) Beta (Hi-

Fi). VHS (both closed captions). \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Hells Angels on Wheels. Color. 1967. Jack Nicholson, Adam Roarke, Sabrina Scharf, Sonny Barger. Outlaw motorcycle club's journeys. 95 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Monterey.

Hunt the Mon Down/Smashing the Rockets. B&W. 1951/1938. *Hunt*: Gig Young. Public defender sets out to clear fugitive. *Smashing*: Chester Morris. Real-life exploits of New York DA Thomas Dewey. 137 min. Beta, VHS. \$34.95. RKO.

The Idolmaker. Color. 1980. Ray Sharkey, Tovah Feldshuh. Dark, desperate corners of the '50s rock & roll world; based on the career of Bob Marcucci, who created teen idols Frankie Avalon, Fabian. 119 min. (PG) LV (stereo). \$34.95. MGM/UA.

The Initiation of Sorah. Color. 1977. Shelley Winters, Kay Lenz, Kathryn Crosby, Morgan Brittany,

Free-spirited gypsy falls in love with local minister. 101 min. Beta, VHS. \$34.95. RKO.

A Long Way Home. Color. 1981. Timothy Hutton, Brenda Vaccaro, Rosanna Arquette. Young man's attempts to reunite his brother and sister after they have been separated as children. 97 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$59.95. U.S.A.

A Matter of Life and Death. Color. 1984. Linda Lavin, Salome Jens, Gerald S. O'Laughlin, J. Pat O'Malley. Life of Joy Euphemia, leading advocate of hospice care for the terminally ill. 98 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$59.95. U.S.A.

No Way to Treat a Lady. Color. 1968. Rod Steiger, Lee Remick, George Segal, Eileen Heckart, Murray Hamilton, Michael Dunn. Cop trails playboy who is a real ladykiller. 108 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Paramount.

Portrait of a Showgirl. Color.



Morgan Fairchild. Young girl possesses fearsome psychic powers. 96 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Worldvision.

King's Row. B&W. 1941. Robert Cummings, Ann Sheridan, Betty Field, Nancy Coleman, Ronald Reagan, Claude Rains. Doctor flees to Europe when the woman he loves suddenly dies. 127 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$59.98. Key.

A Lost Cry for Help. Color. Linda Purl, Shirley Jones, Tony LoBianco. Psychiatrist helps girl explore her guilt, insecurity. 98 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Unicorn.

The Lost Fight. Color. 1982. Don Dunphy, Salvatore Sanchez, Fred Williamson, Willie Colon, Ruben Blades, Joe Spinell, Darlaine Fluegel, Nerida Mercado. Young boxer falls prey to underworld. 85 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Thorn EMI.

Little Ladies of the Night. Color. 1977. Linda Purl, Carolyn Jones, Clifton Davis, David Soul, Lou Gossett Jr. Teenage prostitution. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Prism.

The Little Minister. B&W. 1934. Katharine Hepburn, John Beal, Donald Crisp, Andy Clyde, Beryl Mercer.

1982. Lesley Ann Warren, Rita Moreno, Tony Curtis. Inexperienced showgirl guided through the pitfalls of Las Vegas life by cynical veteran. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Prism.

The Rip Off. Color. 1981. Lee Van Cleef, Karen Black, Edward Albert, Robert Alda, Lionel Stander. Diamond heist. 99 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Worldvision.

The River Niger. Color. Lou Gossett Jr., Cicely Tyson, James Earl Jones. Inner-city revolution. 104 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Continental.

Rush It. Color. Tom Berenger, Jill Eikenberry. Outgoing girl works as messenger in N.Y.C. 78 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Unicorn.

Sizzle. Color. 1981. Loni Anderson, Leslie Uggams, John Forsythe. Small-town singer is star attraction in speakeasy. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Prism.

Smithereens. Color. Susan Berman, Brad Rinn, Richard Hell. Working-class girl flees to Manhattan. 90 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Media.

Sorry, Wrong Number. B&W. 1948. Barbara Stanwyck, Burt Lancaster, Ann Richards, Wendell Corey,

Oh, Heavenly Dog





Ed Begley, Leif Erickson. Woman overhears her murder plotted on the telephone. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Paramount.

The Spell. Color. 1977. Lee Grant, James Olson, Susan Myers. Teenager inflicts terror on her enemies. 74 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Worldvision.

Torn Between Two Lovers. Color. 1974. George Peppard, Lee Remick, Joseph Bologna. Woman must decide between marriage or new life with attractive architect. 97 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$59.95. U.S.A.

The Word. Color. 1978. David Janssen, James Whitmore, Eddie Albert, Florida Balkan, Geraldine Chaplin, John Houston, Nicol Williamson, Hurd Hatfield, Ron Moody, Diana Muldaur. Discovery of ancient papyrus. 188 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$69.95. U.S.A.

Yentl. Color. 1983. Barbra Streisand, Nehemiah Persoff. Courageous Jewish woman growing up in Eastern Europe at the turn of the century. 134 min. (PG) CED (stereo, closed captions). \$39.98 CBS/Fox.

FANTASY and SCI-FI

The Adventures of Tapper. B&W. Leo G. Carroll, Anne Jeffreys, Bob Sterling, Lee Patrick. Two ghosts on the loose. An episode from the TV series. 93 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. U.S.A.

A Bay Named Charlie Brown. Color. Animated. Charlie Brown readies himself for the baseball season. 80 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$39.98. CBS/Fox.

Cantinflas, Volume II: Galaxies and Games. Color. 1983. Animated. The "Little Amigo" takes a grand tour of our galaxy, returns to soccer, tennis, baseball, rugby, golf, other games. 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Family.

64 Video

A Christmas Carol. Color. Animated. Scrooge encounters spirits of Christmas past, present, and future. 72 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Vestron.

Danger Mouse, Cassette #1. Color. Animated. Dashing mouse. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Thorn EMI.

Davy Crockett on the Mississippi. Color. 1976. Animated. Legend of early America. 49 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Worldvision.

Deathstalker. Color. 1983. Barbi Benton. Bored warrior sets off to win throne of evil wizard, love of high-spirited princess. 80 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$79.95. Vestron.

Dr. Seuss Video Festival. Color. 1970/1966. Animated. *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *Horton Hears a Who*. 51 min. LV. \$34.95. MGM/UA.



A Family Circus Christmas. Color. 1975. Animated. Jeffy wants to see the granddad he has never known. 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Family.

Hurray for Betty Boop. Color. 1980. Animated. Betty Boop, her dog Pudgy, Koko the Clown, Grumpy, Bimbo. Includes fantasy numbers from *Minni the Moocher* (1932) and *Snow White* (1933), plus new material created from original Max and Dave Fleischer cels; voices by Tom Smothers, Victoria D'Orazi. 81 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.98. Warner.

Jack O'Lantern and Yankee Doodle. Color. Animated double

feature. *Jack*: grinning good-hearted goblin defeats Zelda the witch. *Yankee*: Paul Revere completes his midnight ride. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Prism.

The Mon in the Santa Claus Suit. Color. Fred Astaire, Gary Burghoff, John Byner, Bert Convy, Nanette Fabray. Owner of Nick's Costume Shop mysteriously comes to the aid of 3 different men portraying Santa Claus. 96 min. Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Media.

Master of the World. Color. 1961. Vincent Price, Charles Bronson, Henry Hull, Mary Webster, David Frankham. Fanatical 19th-century inventor uses flying fortress as an anti-war weapon. 95 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

My Little Pony. Color. 1984. Animated. Ponies refuse to pull the evil Tirac's chariot. Voices of Tony Randall, Sandy Duncan. 30 min. Beta, VHS. \$19.95. Children's.

The Neverending Story. Color. 1984. Barrett Oliver, Noah Hathaway, Tami Stronach, Patricia Hayes, Sydney Bromley, Gerald McRaney, Moses Gunn. Boy drawn into fantasy world, exploits of brave young warrior. 94 min. (PG) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). \$79.95/LV (stereo, CX, closed captions). \$34.98. Warner.

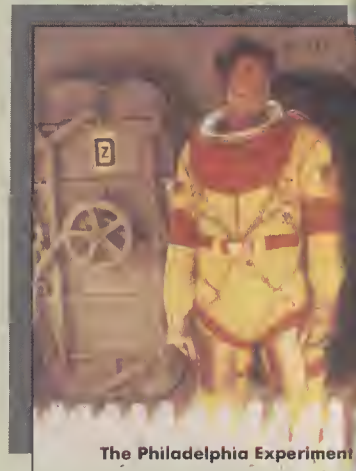
Paddy Beaver. Color. 1978. Animated. Newest resident in the Green Forest. 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Family.

The Philadelphia Experiment. Color. 1984. Michael Pare, Nancy

(stereo enhanced, closed captions). \$79.95/LV. \$34.95. CED. \$29.95. Classics.

Sarah and the Squirrel. Color. Animated and live-action. Sarah, a little girl with an extraordinary desire to survive. Mia Farrow is the voice of Sarah. 74 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$29.98. CBS/Fox.

Scrooge. Color. Albert Finney, David Collings, Richard Beaumont, Alec Guinness, Edith Evans, Kenneth More. Movie version of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. 115 min. (G) CED. \$19.98. CBS/Fox.



Snoopy, Came Home. Color. Animated. Charlie Brown, Lucy, Linus, the gang search for Snoopy. 80 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$39.98. CBS/Fox.

The Saldier's Tale. Color. Animated. Man tries to find his way home despite the temptations of the devil. Voices of Max Von Sydow, Galina Panova, Andre Gregory. Music by Igor Stravinsky. Story by C.F. Ramuz. Designs by R.O. Blechman. 56 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$39.95/LV (stereo). \$34.95. MGM/UA.

Terror of Mechagadzilla. Color. 1978. Katsuhito Sasaki, Tomoko Al. Ogres from outer space build robot Godzilla, guided by an evil bionic woman with X-ray eyes, in an attack on the real Godzilla. 89 min. (G) Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Paramount.

The Three Musketeers. Color. 1973. Animated. French swordsmen in the royal service. 47 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Worldvision.

Toby and the Kaala Bear. Color. Animated. Little boy, his pet Koala bear in Australia. 77 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$29.98. CBS/Fox.

Top Cat, Vol. 2. Color. 1961. Animated. New York feline lives with five shabby pals in an alley. 50 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Worldvision.

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. Color. 1973. Animated. Search for an unknown sea monster. 47 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Worldvision.

Ziggy's Gift. Color. 1982. Animated. Ziggy tangles with a street-

Allen. Top-secret naval experiments. 101 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$79.95. Thorn EMI.

Paga for President—I Go Pogo. Color. 1979. Animated. Pogo Possum, the gang from the Okefenokee Swamp in a run for the White House. Voices of Jonathan Winters, Vincent Price, Ruth Buzzi, Stan Freberg, Jimmy Breslin. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Disney.

Robin Hood. Color. 1973. Animated. Voices of Peter Ustinov, Terry-Thomas, Phil Harris, Brian Bedford, Roger Miller, Pat Buttram, George Lindsey, Andy Devine, Monica Evans. 83 min. Beta, VHS

The Neverending Story



corner Santa scam, shows the true meaning of Christmas. 30 min. Beta, VHS. \$19.95. Vestron.

HORROR

Alien Prey. Color. Alien mission for food on Earth. 85 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Comet.

Before I Hong. B&W. 1940. Boris Karloff, Edward Van Sloan, Evelyn Keyes, Bruce Bennett, Pedro de Cordoba. After taking youth serum, man's sentence is commuted to life imprisonment. 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Block Room. B&W. 1935. Boris Karloff, Marian Marsh, Robert Allen, Katherine DeMille, John Buckler, Thurston Hall. Twin brothers locked in struggle to the death. 70 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Castle of Evil. Color. 1966. Virginia Mayo, Scott Brady. Travel to Caribbean island castle to hear the reading of a will. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. NTA.

Couldron of Blood. Color. 1968. Boris Karloff, Jean-Pierre Aumont. Blind sculptor uses human skeletons as framework for his sculpture. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. NTA.

Chamber of Fear. Color. Boris Karloff, Isela Vega, Julissa, Carlos East. Mental torture that paralyzes the heart and senses. 88 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Unicorn.

Color Me Blood Red. Color. Painter's desire for a special shade. 75 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Comet.

Count Dracula. Color. 1971. Christopher Lee, Klaus Kinski. Horrifying encounters with Count Dracula, other vampires in the mysterious mountains of Transylvania. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. NTA.

Dr. Terror's House of Horrors. Color. 1965. Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing. Terrible fates cast by mysterious doctor and his deck of Tarot cards. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. NTA.

Fridoy the 13th—The Final Chopper. Color. 1984. Jason returns to wreak further havoc on the citizens of Crystal Lake. 90 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$79.95./LV. \$29.95. Paramount.

Girls Nite Out. Color. 1983. Rutanya Alda, Hal Holbrook, Suzanne

Barnes, Laurie Marie Taylor, David Holbrook. Sorority house scavenger hunt turns into blood-filled nightmare. 96 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$69.95. Thorn EMI.

The Grim Reaper. Color. 1981. Tisa Farrow, George Eastman, Saverio Vallone. Flesh-eating madman terrorizes tourists abandoned on Greek island. 82 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Monterey.

House of Wax. Color. 1953. Vincent Price, Frank Lovejoy, Phyllis Kirk, Carolyn Jones, Paul Picerni, Roy Roberts, Charles Bronson (Buchinski). Deranged sculptor's wax museum contains recreations of things once alive. 88 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

It Lives Again. Color. 1978. Frederic Forrest, Kathleen Lloyd, John P. Ryan, John Marley, Andrew Duggan, Eddie Constantine, James Dixon. Hell-spawned baby meets two other monster infants. 91 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

It's Alive. Color. 1973. John Ryan, Sharon Farrell, Andrew Duggan, Guy Stockwell, James Dixon, Michael Ansara. Couple gives birth to a homicidal humanoid. 91 min. (PG) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

Lady in a Cage. B&W. 1964. Olivia de Havilland, Jennifer Billingsley, Ann Southern, Jeff Corey, James Caan, Rafael Campos, Scatman Crothers. Rich widow, trapped in her mansion's elevator, tormented by thugs. 95 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Paramount.

Let's Score Jessico to Death. Color. 1971. Zohra Lampert, Barton Heyman, Kevin O'Connor, Mari-Claire Costello, Gretchen Corbet. Mentally unstable girl gets fright treatment at new country home. 89 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Paramount.

The Mon They Could Not Hong. B&W. 1939. Boris Karloff, Lorna Gray, Robert Wilcox, Ann Doran. Maddened scientist, returned to life,

takes revenge on jurors who convicted him. 70 min. Beta (Hi-Fi). VHS. \$59.95. RCA/Columbia.

Secret Beyond the Door. B&W. 1948. Joan Bennett, Michael Redgrave. Wealthy heiress marries man who has bizarre fascination with murder. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. NTA.

Vampire Hookers. Color. John Carradine. Beautiful vampires fulfill their customers' carnal lust before satisfying their own thirst for human blood. 82 min. (R) Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Continental.

INFORMATION

Bottle of Chino. B&W. Struggle of the Chinese people against Japanese militarism in WWII. From the Frank Capra "Why We Fight" series. 83 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Maljack.

Breaking New York Style. Color. Laurie Eastside, host. How to break, spin, bodyrock, perform 17 other moves. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$19.95. Continental.

Hitler: A Coreer. Color. How Hitler changed the world. 150 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. RKO.

Jerry Boker's House Plant Tips & Tricks. Color. Jerry Baker, author of over 35 books on plants and gardening, discusses selection and care of houseplants for maximum growth and beauty. 45 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Associates.

Kennedys Don't Cry. Color, B&W. Behind the scenes look at the Kennedy clan. 100 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Maljack.

Learn to Soil. Steve Colgate, Audrey Landers, Sam Jones. Basic to intermediate instruction: safety, handling emergencies, boat design, terms. 106 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Sun.

The Other Side of Nashville. 1983. Country music through the eyes, performances of Bobby Bare, Johnny Cash, Charlie Daniels, Gail Davis, Terri Gibbs, Emmylou Harris, Kris Kristofferson, Charlie McCoy, Willie Nelson, Carl Perkins, Rattlesnake Annie, Kenny Rogers, Ricky Skaggs, Porter Wagoner, Hank Williams Jr., Owen Davis. Includes all or parts of over 35 songs. 118 min. LV (stereo). \$34.95. MGM/UA.

Raquel, Total Beauty and Fitness. Color. 1984. Raquel Welch demonstrates exercises for men and women of all ages. 90 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Thorn EMI.

Rock and Roll: The Early Days. Color, B&W. Hits from the '50s with Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Fats Domino, others. Includes comments from adults condemning rock & roll, Alan Freed's Moondog Show, Elvis Presley on Milton Berle's show. 60 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (Hi-

Fi, Dolby stereo). \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

Romper Room and Friends: Tape I, Numbers, Letters and Words. Color. Kimble, Do Bee, UpUp, Granny Cat present amusing approach to letter and number recognition. 45 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

Romper Room and Friends: Tape II, Go to the Zoo. Color. Join UpUp, Kimble in learning about giraffes, kangaroos, gorillas, ostriches, elephants. 45 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

Romper Room and Friends: Tape III, Playful Projects. Color. Creative arts and crafts activities include junk sculpture, egg-carton crafts, finger puppets. 45 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$19.98. CBS-Fox.

Romper Room and Friends: Tape IV, Movement and Rhythm. Color. Take a plane ride with Kimble, learn how to play soccer, visit Chinese acrobats and country dancers. 45 min. Beta, VHS (closed captions). \$19.98. CBS-Fox.

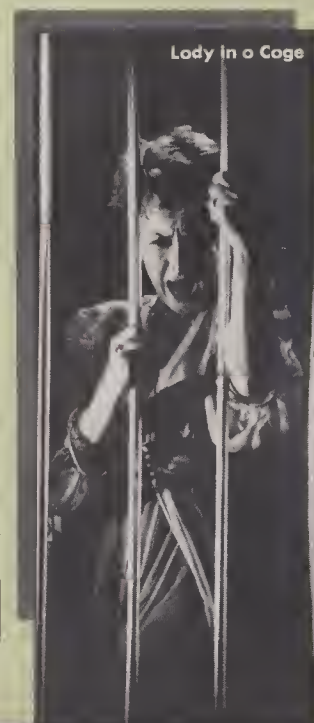


Showbiz Ballyhoo. Color. 1983. David Steinberg, Ronald Reagan, Bette Davis, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland. Methods used by Hollywood filmmakers to generate audience enthusiasm through publicity, promotion. 76 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. U.S.A.

Strong Kids/Safe Kids. Color. 1984. Henry Winkler, John Ritter, Mariette Hartley, Kee McFarlane, Dr. Sol Gordon. Shows parents and children how to detect, protect against many forms of child abuse. Contains extra 18 minutes of blank tape to record and preserve footage of children for identification purposes. 42 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Paramount.

Thank You, Mr. President: The Press Conferences of JFK. From the original broadcast press conferences of John F. Kennedy. Presents JFK thinking and joking on his feet, getting angry, darkest hours, moments of triumph. Narrated by E.G. Marshall. 55 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. Worldvision.

Wor Comes to Americo. B&W.



Lady in a Cage

U.S. war effort and all wars fought on American soil. From the Frank Capra "Why We Fight" series." 65 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Majack.

Yes You Can Cook Microwave. Color. Donovan Joe Fandre demonstrates cooking with a microwave oven. Includes book *Microwaves Are for Cooking*. 60 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. JCI.

MISC.

Ploymote Review #2. Color. Marianne Gravatte, Ruth Guerri, Marlene Janssen, Carina Persson, Cathy St. George, Veronica Gamba. Six *Playboy* Playmates share their lives, love, fantasies. 63 min. (mature) CED (closed captions). \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

Sexcetera: The World According to Playboy. Color. Crystal Smith, Dan Kain. Humorous look at the contemporary sexual scene. 66 min. (R) Beta, VHS (Hi-Fi stereo, closed captions). \$59.98. Key.

MUSIC

Average White Bond: Shine. Color. European concert. Includes "Let's Go 'round Again," other songs. 30 min. Beta, VHS. \$29.95. VCL.

Breakin'. Color. 1984. Adolfo "Shabba-Doo" Quinones, Michael "Boogaloo Shrimp" Chambers, Lucinda Dickey. Two street dancers team up with newfound friend. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$79.95. MGM/UA.

Cinderello. Color. 1961. Ballerina Raisa Stuchikova in 1961 stage performance of Sergei Prokofiev's work by the Moscow Bolshoi Ballet. 81 min. Beta, VHS. \$55 plus \$2 s&h. International.

Hotdance. Color. 1984. 10 dance videos performed by 12 professionals. 50 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. Prelude.

Judy Garland in Concert: Volume One. B&W. 1964. Garland in concerts originally seen on CBS in 1964. Includes "Rockabye Your Baby," "That's Entertainment," "Liza," "Over the Rainbow." 60 min. Beta, VHS (stereo enhanced). \$39.95. RKO.

Judy Garland in Concert: Volume Two. B&W. 1964. Garland's TV specials include "The Boy Next Door," "On the Atchison, Topeka and the Santa Fe," "The Man That Got Away." 60 min. Beta, VHS (stereo enhanced). \$39.95. RKO.

Meet the Bond Leaders Bonus A. B&W. 1939-65. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Hal Kemp and his Orchestra—1939, Johnny Long and his Orchestra—1942, Frankie Carle Orchestra—1947, Jan Garber Orchestra—1965, Art Mooney Orchestra—1965. 51 min. Beta, VHS. Offered as premium with minimum purchase. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Bonus B. B&W. 1942-65. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Ray McKinley and his Orchestra—1942, Dick Stabile and his Orchestra—1942, Sam Donahue and his Orchestra—1965, and Stan Kenton and his Orchestra—1965. 44 min. Beta, VHS. Offered as premium with minimum purchase. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 101. B&W. 1964-65. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Count Basie and his Orchestra—1964, Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra—1965, Duke Ellington and his Famous Orchestra—1965. 46 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 102. B&W. 1965. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Harry James and his Orchestra—1965, Ray McKinley and the Glenn Miller Orchestra—1965, Si Zentner and his Orchestra—1965, Ralph Marterie and his Orchestra—1965. 52 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95.

Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 103. B&W. 1965. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Tex Beneke and his Orchestra—1965, Ralph Flanagan and his Orchestra—1965, Les & Larry Elgart and their Orchestra—1965, Vaughn Monroe and his Orchestra—1965. 53 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 104. B&W. 1942-1947. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Tex Beneke and the Glenn Miller Orchestra—1946, Gene Krupa and his Orchestra—1946, Jerry Wald and his Orchestra—1942, Stan Kenton and his Orchestra—1947. 53 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 105. B&W. 1935-40. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Larry Clinton and his Orchestra—1939, Jimmy Dorsey and his Orchestra—1940, Red Nichols and his Orchestra—1935, Bunny Berigan with the Freddie Rich Orchestra—1936, Ina Ray Hutton and her Orchestra—1936-37. 50 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 106. B&W. 1936-39. Specially mastered and reproduced big-band performances by Lawrence Welk and his Champagne Music—1939, Russ Morgan and his Orchestra—1936-39, Hal Kemp Orchestra—1936, Jan Garber Orchestra—1939. 53 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Swingtime.

Meet the Bond Leaders Volume No. 107. B&W. 1955. Specially mastered and reproduced. 20 band tunes performed and announced by Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians. 54 min. Beta, VHS. \$49.95. Swingtime.

MTV Live Video to Go. Color. Performances by Duran Duran, Greg Kihn, Tina Turner, Billy Squire, Tubes, Peter Tosh, others. 45 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Radio.

MTV Video to Go. Color. Performances by Duran Duran, Stray Cats, Genesis, Thomas Dolby, the Motels, Kajagoogoo, J. Geils Band, Dwight Twilley, Tubes, Talk Talk, Naked Eyes, others. 45 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Radio.

The Playboy Jazz Festival, Volume 2. Color. Live Jazz concert features Weather Report, Manhattan Transfer, Ornette Coleman, Prime Time, Dave Brubeck Quintet, Sarah Vaughn, Bill Cosby as host. 90 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (Hi-Fi, Dolby stereo). \$29.95. RCA/Columbia.

The Roots of Rock 'n' Roll, Vol. I. B&W. Performances by Elvis Presley, Everly Brothers, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Bill Haley, Fats Domino, Rick Nelson, others. VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Radio.

The Roots of Rock 'n' Roll, Vol.

II. B&W. Explores the British Beat during 1963-67 and includes performances by the Kinks, Beatles, Rolling Stones, Who, Animals, Dave Clark 5, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Hollies, others. VHS (stereo). \$29.95. Radio.

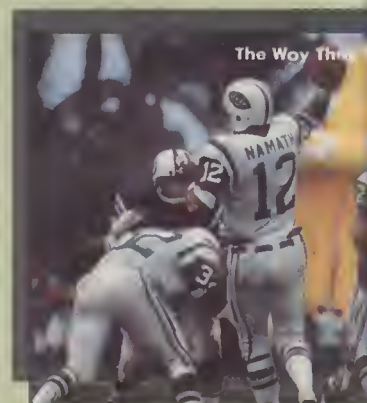
The Synchronicity Concert. Color. B&W. 1984. The Police—Sting, Andy Summers, Stewart Copeland—in concert at the Omni, Atlanta, 11/83. Includes "Every Breath You Take," "Wrapped Around Your Finger," "Message in a Bottle," "Synchronicity," others. 75 min. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (Hi-Fi, Dolby stereo). \$39.95./LV. A&M/I.R.S.

The Ultimate Swon Lake. Color. 1984. Moscow performance of *Swan Lake* by the Bolshoi Ballet with Natalia Bessmertnova, Boris Akimov. Gene Kelly, host/narrator. Beta (Hi-Fi stereo). VHS (stereo). \$79.95. Kultur.

Willie Nelson and Family in Concert. Color. 1984. Willie Nelson, family, band, crew perform 28 of his favorites including "On the Road Again," "Always on My Mind," "Stardust," "Georgia." 89 min. CED (stereo, closed captions). \$19.98. CBS/Fox.

Willy Wonko and the Chocolate Factory. Color. 1971. Gene Wilder, Jack Albertson, Peter Ostrum, Roy Kinnear, Denise Nickerson, Leonard Stone, Julie Dawn Cole, Paris Themmen, Dodo Denney. The Candy Man and his eye-popping world of treats. 100 min (G) Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

SPORTS



The Legend of the Lightning Bolt. Color. History of the San Diego Chargers, one of the original American Football League franchises. 30 min. Beta, VHS. \$34.95. NFL.

Shoot for the Stars. Color. Documents the Dallas Cowboys, from their expansion days of 1960 to the powerhouse teams of the 1970s and '80s. 40 min. Beta, VHS. \$39.95. NFL.

The Way They Were. Color. History of the New York Jets, who began their existence as the New York Titans. 23 min. Beta, VHS. \$34.95. NFL.



LAUREN BACALL COLLECTOR

Dork Possoge. B&W. 1947. Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Bruce Bennett, Agnes Moorehead, Tom D'Andrea, Housely Stevenson. San Quentin escapee erroneously charged with killing his wife. 107 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.98. Key.

Harper. Color. 1966. Paul Newman, Lauren Bacall, Julie Harris, Shelley Winters, Robert Wagner, Janet Leigh, Arthur Hill. 119 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. Warner.

Hollywood Bloopers. B&W. 1950s. Humorous outtakes with appearances by Lauren Bacall, Ronald Reagan, James Stewart, Joan Blondell, Barbara Stanwyck, Bette Davis, James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Rosalind Russell, Errol Flynn, Kirk Douglas. 40 min. Beta, VHS. Dimensions.

How to Marry a Millionaire. Color. 1953. Lauren Bacall, Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable, William Powell, Rory Calhoun, David Wayne, Cameron Mitchell. 96 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. CBS/Fox.

Key Largo. B&W. 1948. Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Edward G. Robinson, Lionel Barrymore, Claire Trevor, Thomas Gomez, Dan Seymour, Monte Blue, Jay Silverheels. 101 min. Beta, VHS. \$59.95. CBS/Fox/CED. \$21.98. RCA.

Murder on the Orient Express. Color. 1974. Albert Finney as Hercule Poirot, Lauren Bacall, Martin Balsam, Ingrid Bergman, Jacqueline Bisset, Jean-Pierre Cassel, Sean Connery, John Gielgud, Wendy Hiller, Anthony Perkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Rachel Roberts, Richard Widmark, Michael York. 128 min. Beta, VHS. \$72.95./LV. Paramount/CED. \$34.98. RCA.

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A&M Video, 1416 N. La Brea Ave., Hollywood, Cal. 90028 (213-469-2411).

Video Associates, 5419 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90027 (213-463-3255).

CBS/Fox Video, 1211 Sixth Ave., 2nd floor, New York, N.Y. 10036 (212-819-3200).

Children's Video Library, 1011 High Ridge Rd., Box 4995, Stamford, Conn. 06907 (203-968-0100).

The Classics/Walt Disney Home Video, 500 S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, Cal. 91521 (818-840-1111).

Comet Video, 2320 Cotner, Los Angeles, Cal. 90064 (213-477-8055, 800-821-3427).

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Embassy Home Entertainment, 1901 Ave. of the Stars, Los Angeles, Cal. 90067 (213-553-3600).

Family Home Entertainment, 7920 Alabama Ave., Canoga Park, Cal. 91304 (800-423-7455).

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International Historic Films, Box 29035, Chicago, Ill. 60629 (312-436-8051).

JCI Video, 5308 Derry Ave., Agoura Hills, Cal. 91301 (818-889-9022).

Key Video, 1298 Prospect Ave., La Jolla, Cal. 92037 (619-459-0500).

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Medio Home Entertainment, 116 N. Robertson Blvd., Suite 909, Los Angeles, Cal. 90048 (213-855-1611).

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MPI Program Service Division, Maljack Productions, 15825 Rob Roy Dr., Oak Forrest, Ill. 60452 (312-687-7881).

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NFL Films Video, 330 Fellowship Rd., Mt. Laurel, N.J. 08054 (609-778-1600, ext. 301).

NTA Home Entertainment, 12636 Beatrice St., Box 66930, Los Angeles, Cal. 90066 (213-306-4040).

Ocean Video, 4605 Lankershim Blvd. #601, North Hollywood, Cal. 91602 (818-506-3216).

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Rodia Shack, One Tandy Center, Fort Worth, Tex. 76102 (telephone n.a.).

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Sun West Video Services, 950 Hampshire Rd. #108, Westlake Village, Cal. 91361 (805-495-3082).

Swingtime Video, Box 3476, Hollywood, Cal. 90078 (213-463-2134).

Thorn EMI Home Video, 1370 Sixth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019 (212-977-8990).

TWE, Trans World Entertainment, 6430 Sunset Blvd. #505, Hollywood, Cal. 90028 (213-461-0255).

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VCL Communications, c/o Media Home Entertainment, 116 N. Robertson Blvd. #909, Los Angeles, Cal. 90048 (213-855-1611).

Vestran Video, 1011 High Ridge Rd., Box 4000, Stamford, Conn. 06907 (203-968-0000).

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RCA's Dimensia is by far the most fully integrated of the super systems. It boasts an extensive add-on line of integrated audio-video components, all controllable from a single remote (inset). A computer module in the monitor processes the system's many mix'n'match functions and displays them on the monitor screen.



HIGH TECH, HIGH TICKET

Super systems are drifting into the home entertainment world. A "super system" is an advanced and balanced collection of video and audio components that work together. And it has room for yet-to-be-born electronic wonders. Advances in video fuel the super system's progress.

Previous stabs at audio/video systems were the domain of the audio chauvinists. The power boxes had clearly designated video inputs, but each was a case of *hustler oblige*. Video requirements were paid ear service. Now, with broadcast stereo television, MTV and its brethren, and Hi-Fi stereo VCRs, genuine video/audio systems make more sense—and require more care.

There's a final logic embedded in any system—whether super or modest. The system you buy now (if you buy one) may determine the brand, even the model number of components you will buy in the future. People who have systems like to get items that fit into the system. The purchaser no longer must worry about being a quivering mass of gelatin. He can march right into the store and buy, buy, buy with much assurance and little deliberation.

Audio Rules

Right now there are two kinds of super systems. The conventional approach, represented by JVC's Crossmedia and Fisher's AVS 1500, gathers many well-crafted video and audio components. In cosmetic design, all the parts wear the same duds. Both JVC and Fisher proceed along a prosaic path. They are no-bologna systems whose admirers will find joy in the setup's look and performance, as well as in the promise of performance by components yet unborn. RCA's Dimensia, however, is the most provocative and the most ambitious in concept and execution. If RCA has its way, Dimensia will be no mere sound/image package. It will be a way of life.

The best way to understand Dimensia is

INTERGRATED COMPONENT SYSTEMS ARRIVE BY NORMAN SCHREIBER

to first contemplate Fisher's AVS-1500 and JVC's Crossmedia. The two systems are clearly made up of high-enders. Both carry the audiophile mystique into the realm of video.

Crossmedia's sum is made up of 12 parts (15 counting the rack and speaker stands). Each component is a shiny bedialed black box splashed with brilliant yellow numbers and red symbols. It retains an audio emphasis, underlined by the way JVC's catalogue mentions the receiver/monitor and VCR only in passing. There are a couple of interesting genuinely systematic touches.

The VS-1B is a graphic synthesizer. That is, it throws images, based on sound being played, onto the screen. The listener can choose from five types of images: *PEAK/VU Display*. The VU (volume unit) meter gets sprayed right onto the screen. In addition to giving the VU meter a shot at stardom, the monitor also displays the highest peak in the music played. (This is a situation in which peaking is allowed.) *Spectrum Analysis Display*. This colorful bar graph depicts the sound being played. It breaks tones into 26 frequencies and mea-

sures the volume in 2-decibel steps. *Sound Image Display*. This calls attention to the stereo location (as in left and right channels). The image on view is a field of horizontal bars. Each looks like a wristwatch in silhouette. The length of the "strap" on each side of the "watch" represents volume. *Sound Space Display*. The image is said to capture the music's mood. The display suggests light shows at the Fillmore (for you nostalgia buffs) with '80s-style grid graphics. Like, wow. *Musical Scaling Display*. You see musical notes on a staff. These represent the melody line. A keyboard, located on the bottom of the screen, shows the notes as they are played.

The graphic synthesizer is not essential, but does represent a willingness to explore possibilities. JVC's VP-100B, a PCM digital recorder, works with the VCR to create digital audio recording. This component also smartly uses its place in the system. Other Crossmedia components include an 80-watt-per-channel amplifier; an audio/video switcher that lets you seesaw between audio and video elements; an AM/FM tuner with a built-in timer that can turn on 16 desired programs over a week; audio twin-cassette deck with auto-reverse (this permits the user to record or play on both sides of the tape without having to remove fanny from chair to turn over the tape); a front-loading linear-tracking turntable; a Compact Disc player; and a 24-band stereo equalizer and speakers. Oh yes—there's a 20-inch monitor/receiver and VHS Hi-Fi VCR.

Altogether, the Crossmedia system as constituted costs about \$5000. JVC folks anticipate that remote control will be added. You also can expect to see a 25- or 26-inch screen.

Fisher's AVS 1500 has all the above components except the graphic synthesizer (no pictures of musical notes float on the screen), PCM digital recorder, and switching box. Its amplifier is rated at 150 watts per channel, and it's got a 20-band equalizer. The Fisher monitor/receiver is a 25-inch stereo-ready remote-control



monitor. The VCR is a VHS. The audio controls have some responsive amenities built in. For example, if you are recording from turntable to audio cassette, the tape starts moving when the tonearm touches down on the disc. The AVS-1500 costs about \$3000.

Essentially, both systems promise reliable high-quality performance. They are willing to accommodate additions (such as a LaserVision videodisc player). As with their strictly audio antecedents, the Crossmedia and AVS 1500 components are hooked up within their respective systems via the "all roads lead to Rome" school. The inputs essentially go into one or two main pieces.

They Called It What?

Life is different with RCA's Dimensia. (Yes, the name does evoke a 1960s horror thriller starring an aged actress who adds a touch of class not to mention good, loud screams.) Dimensia consists of 26-inch stereo monitor/receiver, stereo VHS Hi-Fi VCR, 50-watt-per-channel amplifier, AM/FM tuner, Compact Disc player, turntable, audio-cassette deck, and speakers. A somewhat restrained optional set of speakers is available just for use with the monitor/receiver. Dimensia is the most video-oriented of the super systems—but there's more to it than that.

The Dimensia feature most likely to inspire wholesale glazing over of eyes holds the secret of its remarkable personality. Instead of the cat's cradle of cables that characterizes other systems, one Dimensia component plugs into another, which plugs into another, which plugs into—you get the idea. Each set of cables in this daisychain carries an extra input jack. Called the "control" input, this line carries vital messages (like what gets turned on and off) throughout the system. The cables are color-coded: white for left, red for right, black for control. The brains of the gang is in the monitor/receiver. RCA gave it an extra set of microprocessor smarts,

and each component also has a microprocessor.

Because of the daisychain hookup and the intelligence in the monitor/receiver, you can use a special remote control to make any part of the system (audio and/or video) comply with your every whim. All messages to and from the system appear on the monitor. The controller's buttons are simple: no complicated sequence of thumb mashing is required. In fact, giving one command puts all necessary operations into effect. For example, a turn-on-radio command automatically turns on the amplifier. The monitor/receiver acts as traffic manager because, according to an RCA spokesman, people are used to pointing remote controllers at TV sets. This degree of control—not to mention logic—is a breakthrough.

As the tale is told, for three and a half years RCA engineers worked on an integrated A/V system. They proudly took

The \$3000 Fisher AVS-1500 (left), with 150-watt audio amplifier and VHS VCR. JVC's \$5000 Crossmedia system has a VHS Hi-Fi VCR, PCM digital recorder, and audio/video switcher.

their efforts, which included an elaborate switching box, to the marketing folks. The marketers looked at the switching box and its potential for receiving lots of cables. They graciously rendered a "yuck!" They didn't feel comfortable selling something that looks like a spaghetti bush.

It was back to the drawing board. Since the "star" style of connection was a sales no-no, the only remaining alternative was to use a "bus" structure—the daisychain approach. Conventional wisdom suggested that the bus structure invited a phenomenon called "reflection" (as a high-frequency signal moves along the chain to and from its destination, some of the information it carries bounces back and forth, thus interfering with the signal at hand). RCA engineers state that by giving careful attention to the switches they have foiled reflection.

This bus structure opens up the system to having more kinds of components than previously would have been possible. As a matter of fact, 256 different kinds of device can be controlled by the system. Unfortunately, much fewer can be hooked up at one time. Depending upon which RCA spokesman you talk to, 16 to 19 devices can ride the bus. Additional Dimensia stuff can and probably will include teletext terminal, DBS receiver, and (sound of RCA exec grinding teeth) an LV disc player. Possible Dimensia product categories go well beyond video and audio gear. A home-security apparatus is one example. Major and minor appliances—toasters and vacuum cleaners (both cited by an RCA spokesman)—are less obvious but possi-

continued on page 127



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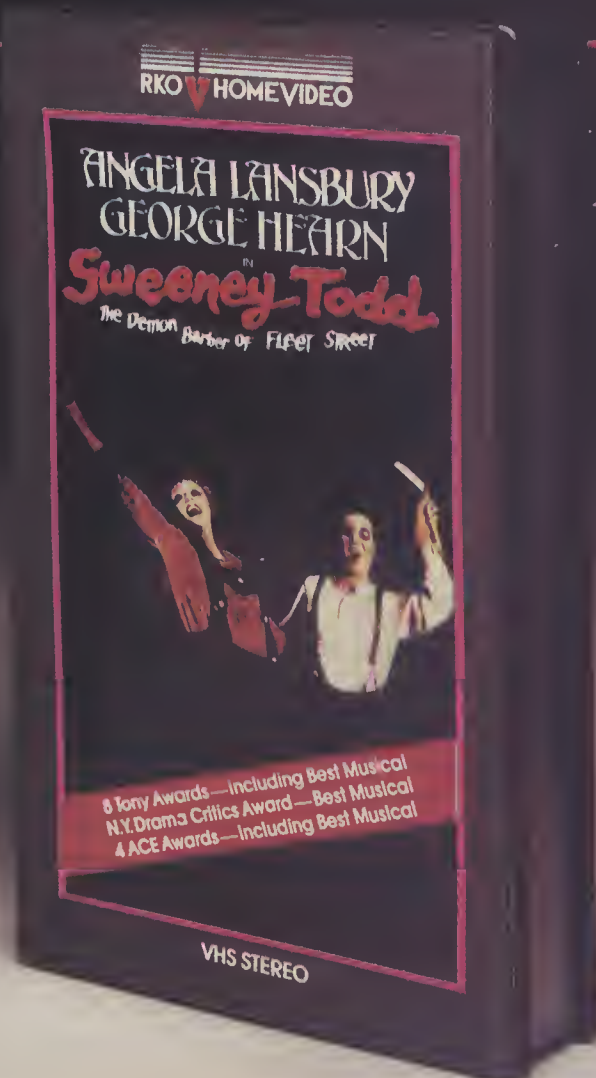
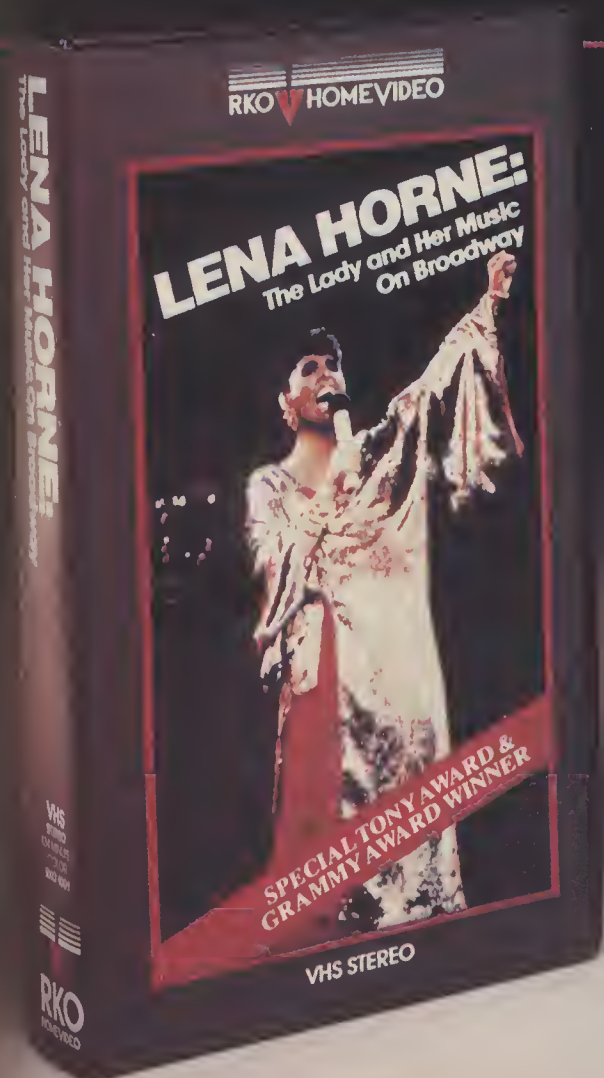
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THE BEST *of* 1 9 8 4

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What a year! We've seen hundreds of new tapes and discs, dozens of new players, cameras, camcorders, monitors, and assorted gear—even the introduction of a spanking-new video format. The 12 months recently past have produced an embarrassment of video riches; choosing the best of everything has been a Herculean task, arduous enough to daunt even the most passionate videophiles. But at last the task is done, the laurels bestowed, the brickbats hurled. Now your humble editors can lean back and relax, secure in the knowledge that if the Video Revolution keeps on going like it's been going—next year the choosing will be even harder!

Sculpture by Ajim/Photo by Hero Ihara

TOP EQUIPMENT

By Lancelot Braithwaite



Above, from top: Panasonic's PV-1730 is a full-featured VHS Hi-Fi machine that is nevertheless easy to operate. The Magnavox 8440 is the best non-Hi-Fi VHS VCR because it offers 'flexibility, ease of operation, and good picture quality.' Below, clockwise from bottom: RCA's VKP950 VHS Hi-Fi portable is a winner because it fills the dual role of table model and 'convertible' more completely than the competition. The Toshiba V-X34 Beta portable weighs just 5.5 pounds with battery, its picture is superb, and audio is topped only by the Hi-Fis. A 'top grade' VHS portable, the Pentax PV-R1000A is a nearly identical twin of co-winner Minolta V-770S.

At the end of each year comes a task I both relish and dread: choosing the best equipment. Berger-Braithwaite Labs has reviewed over the past year for VIDEO Magazine. I look forward to it because it's my state-of-the-hardware evaluation, but dread it because the choosing can be tough.

It was a good year, with advances in almost every area. Technology would occasionally take a giant step forward to create a new class of equipment, and there were smaller advances in features, miniaturization, or better performance. Probably the most welcome development was the introduction of VHS Hi-Fi. It brought the most popular VCR format a sound capability second only to the digital Compact Disc. There are those who would argue that it is third after CDs and PCM (Pulse Code Modulation—a system that uses a VCR and adapter to record digital audio), but PCM use is not widespread enough to qualify as a consumer standard in regular use.

VHS Hi-Fi was not the only major step forward in sound to go with video. In TV the Broadcast Television Systems Committee agreed on standards for Multichannel Television Sound. These standards define how TV sound will be broadcast—not only in stereo with FM-level quality (if not better), but also with a Second Audio Program which can carry an independent program such as a commentary, second language, supplementary information, even a

completely unrelated monaural audio broadcast piggybacked on a standard broadcast-TV signal. The standards will spawn a new generation of video gear: TV sets capable of receiving broadcasts in stereo, plus a new breed of VCR that can receive and record stereo broadcasts.

Another newcomer, this time in the area of cameras, is the Charge Coupled Device solid-state image sensor. It is a competitor to the existing Metal Oxide Semiconductor technology; both free cameras from tube-type image-sensor technology and allow for smaller cameras that are less prone to tube deficiencies. They are less likely to show burns, streaks, and halos; consume less power; and are lighter than tubes. However, currently they are not as light-sensitive as their tube counterparts, so their images are not as good under very low-light situations.

Probably the biggest changes are in the area of camcorders. There we have a new VCR format, 8mm. This new format shows promise but it probably will be years before it represents a major challenge to the established Beta and VHS formats. Current 8mm recorders use a cassette that is a smidgen bigger than an audio cassette and



Photos by Vittorio Sartor

limited to 1-1/2 hours of recording time. Such a length may be adequate for home-made tapes, but may not be long enough for many movies. Proponents of 8mm say their aim is to replace movie cameras—but few people are willing to have one format for recording or playing movies and another for capturing their memories and making home productions. I'll make no predictions about 8mm yet. I remember only too clearly when the Beta format had a maximum recording time of one hour and the VHS format offered only two hours. That was just six years ago, and most people didn't know what a VCR *was* back then.

In other words, 1984 was a year that saw many new ideas and products reach the marketplace. Some, like Multichannel Television Sound, have seen slow growth with only four stations doing any serious stereo broadcasting, but that number is supposed to grow rapidly next year. Other new technologies like 8mm probably will grow at a slower pace. But knowledge and new techniques don't get lost easily—they just form the foundation on which next year's products will be built. It might seem that I've forgotten an item or two: the Epson Elf miniature color TV and the



Pioneer LV/CD player reviewed in this issue. But we haven't. The Elf will be available by the time you read this and it will be a month or so before the Pioneer player is available; however, in keeping with our past practice, only those items reviewed in the January to December issues of one calendar year are included in the "best of" roundup. (That's also why the Mitsubishi VCR with the built-in broadcast-stereo decoder wasn't considered because it wasn't reviewed. You should try it if you live in an area where there is an active stereo broadcast TV station.)

VHS Hi-Fi

There are two winners in this category, the Panasonic PV-1730 and the Zenith VR-4000. I like the PV-1730 for my living room (it's easier to operate), and the 4000 for my test bench, though the technical specs were about equal. The RCA VKT550 was outstanding, too, but it's \$500 less than the 1730 and 4000 and not quite comparable. Both of the latter are full-featured machines with marvelous Hi-Fi sound.

The year started off with a bang with the introduction of the first front-loading LV player and the first random-access CED player from RCA—both featured on our January 1984 cover—but then RCA immediately stole the show with the introduction of its VKT550 VHS Hi-Fi VCR. That VCR and the VHS Hi-Fi machines that followed it offset the huge Hi-Fi lead that the Beta camp had gained with its introduction in 1983. In addition to stan-

Above, from left: The auto white balance, auto fade Sony CCD-G5 is a solid-state model that 'feels like an extension of your hand and eye.' Top marks for the Magnavox 8220, 'a veritable studio-on-your-shoulder.' The Minolta K-520S is a compact, light, auto-focus model with an optional wired remote that gives complete control over transport functions and zooming at distances up to 23 feet.





Pioneers' front-loading LD-700 LaserDisc player has an LV first—the remote's slow motion speed control lets you replay a segment without having to leave your chair.

standard VHS picture quality, the format boasted sound covering the whole range of human hearing (20-20,000 Hertz, \pm 3dB) with a dynamic range of 80+dB, total harmonic distortion (THD) of less than 0.3 percent, wow and flutter of less than 0.005 percent, and channel separation of more than 60dB. The VKT550 followed a precedent set by Sony at the introduction of Beta Hi-Fi: it was not a top-of-the-line machine. It cost about \$1000. I mention that because the 550 was the first VHS Hi-Fi and its price remains attractive. Later machines had a wider range of features as well as the outstanding audio capability.

Audiophiles may find a few deficiencies between the quality of this video Hi-Fi medium and the best the audio world has to offer. Bear with the remainder of us video buffs who still can't find our socks after the new video Hi-Fi machines blew them off. We're happy. Yes, we want audio to improve—but we're now looking for the picture to catch up with the sound. We really believe sound and picture deserve equal treatment. Differences among VHS Hi-Fi machines on both sound and picture seem exceedingly small. The major one is how they handle sound during tape dropouts. Some let all the crackling and distorted sound through, while others immediately switch to the linear track, which does not suffer during those moments. The effect is usually fleeting, so many listeners miss the disturbance. But on a tape with lots of large dropouts the result is annoying. None of the machines we tested seemed to have the problem, but our tests were all done on the best grades of tape. We will have to explore this problem at greater length when we have more data. Anyhow, the differences between these models then boil down to features.

Zenith's VR4000 is an extraordinarily handsome machine because of its clean lines. All the controls are effectively camouflaged in the same color as the surrounding surface, and most are flush with it. While its visual effect is simplicity, its operation is somewhat more difficult than on other machines on which controls are more distinct. It offers a full range of transport controls plus a few less common ones. Its slow speeds are not continuously variable, but are a choice of 1/5, 1/10, 1/20, and 1/40 in both forward and reverse. Its

speed-play modes give a choice of 3X, 5X, and 7X in forward and reverse. Reverse play at multiple speeds is unusual—however, sound disappears at the fast and slow speeds. Also unusual is the locking search mode for which you must press Play to exit. A fascinating discovery awaits you in the ubiquitous compartment in which are hidden other controls which would make the front panel too busy. There are the usual controls on the compartment's back wall. The surprise is a group of touch pads built right into the swing-down door. It maximizes available space within the compartment, but you can't detach the door. I'm not sure how common this practice is, but getting rid of the doors is a convenience I like.

More features are on the back panel, starting with two sets of audio outputs. One offers Hi-Fi output only, and you can leave it permanently attached to the audio system. The other offers a choice of Hi-Fi or linear audio, and you can leave that permanently connected to your video system. That's good because you don't have to turn on the stereo just to listen to playbacks of the news and other low-fi television tapes. The other goodie at the back is a stereo access jack so that you can use the VCR's tuner with a decoder for taping MTS broadcasts. The VR4000 doesn't have a return jack from the decoder to the and cables as if you were recording a simulcast—but you won't need an external tuner, only a decoder. Our only quibble remains the sameness of the front-panel controls. Their similarity means you must pay close attention or you could easily press the wrong button.

The competing Panasonic PV-1730 isn't quite as sleek as the Zenith, though it too uses buttons of the same color as background on the front panel. A wider range of shapes and splashes of color make the tape-motion controls easier to tell apart. There are also a few more controls on the front panel to let you select the various audio options. Since front-panel space is always at a premium, Panasonic gave up the 10-key pad for random-access channel selection and has just up/down scan. However, you have both random access and scan tuning controls on the remote. Slow speed is continuously variable from 1/5 to 1/30 normal speed and 3X speed play is available only in forward—but you do have reverse play at normal speed. These speed choices are available only on the remote. No provision is made for a broadcast-stereo adapter, but add-on tuner/decoders will probably be available for MTS recording. The Zenith may have the edge on speed options, but the Panasonic is easier to operate.

VHS Hi-Fi Portables

The best VHS Hi-Fi portable was the RCA VKP950. Runner-up: Quasar's VP5747.

Over the course of the year we reviewed two other table models, one con-

vertible, and one portable VHS Hi-Fi VCR, although the "portable" and "convertible" are so similar in concept that I think of both as convertibles. Those two were the RCA VKP950 and Quasar VP5747, and both excel in sound quality; however, as with the other Hi-Fi machines, their pictures show no equivalent step forward in quality. The convertible concept has the same VCR function as both a table model and a portable, mating the recorder module with the tuner/timer module without need for wires. The Quasar machine meets those criteria in all respects but one: the video and audio outputs plug directly into the recorder, not the tuner/timer. That's only important if you use the audio/video outputs, not if you use the RF outputs. The Quasar is more compact than the RCA but its linear track is mono only and it has no manual control over input level. It was tough to pick a winner between these two portables because the Quasar offers compactness and the RCA a few more features, but I give RCA the edge because it fills the dual role more completely.

two are almost identical in features and performance. Those are the ones from camera manufacturers: Minolta's V-770S and Pentax's PV-R1000A. Their tuner/timers differ only in color and their recorders have minor differences in transport-control shape—but the locations are the same. Their performance also makes them seem like twins, with the only significant difference being Minolta's slight edge in overall picture quality. The Minolta's price is \$20 higher and it is a smidgen less grainy at the lower speeds. Both are top-grade portables sourced from Hitachi (and both firms want to make their own machines someday). The other top-grade VHS portable was from Olympus, which gets its machine from Matsushita. It is comparably priced and offers a few more features, but in our tests it was weaker on signal-to-noise ratios at all speeds. The other VHS portable was a step-down portable from GE. It is about \$300 cheaper and lacks some of the capabilities of the other three. Among the differences is that it is a two-head mono model instead of a four-head stereo model,

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Proton's 25-inch 602M monitor has a 'great picture,' 5 watt per channel audio amplifier, and stereo audio inputs and outputs. The Fosgate Research 101A Tate II Surround Sound Decoder produces 'outstanding' movie-house audio, and comes with a remote control.

More VHS

The best VHS non-Hi-Fi was the Magnavox 8440.

This year we reviewed only three VHS non-Hi-Fi table models: the Magnavox 8440, Sharp VC-388, and Sansui SV-R9000. Of those my favorite is the Magnavox because it offers flexibility, ease of operation, and very good picture quality. Although the Sansui offers slightly better picture and audio quality than the Sharp, the Sharp offers a remote control that pops out of a drawer in the front panel and has a wide-range of control. The Sharp also has its secondary controls on the top surface of the same drawer, making it easier to operate from a higher angle without squatting to see what you're doing. Its normal front-panel tape-motion controls are not on the front but in a compartment on the top. Sharp's thinking is that most of the time you operate the VCR with the remote control, and that you will store it in that drawer. The remote does work in its storage compartment, so you can control the VCR from the drawer as I did. The only time you're likely to use the transport controls on the top is if the remote is misplaced. Sansui is new to video and its machine is a good performer. The design of its odd-shaped tape-motion controls is novel and its bright blue display controls are a little jarring, but the Sansui is the better performer, though the Sharp offers a wider choice of features.

Of the four VHS portables we reviewed,



TOP TAPES

By Mark Fleischmann



Top: Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger, and Jack Nicholson in James L. Brooks' *'Terms of Endearment.'* Bottom: Meryl Streep in Mike Nichols' *'Silkwood.'* Some of 1984's most heartwarming eccentric performances came quite unexpectedly, from major mainstream performers and productions.

I would rarely watch television were it not for videotape. The networks don't know what's good for me. But at the end of a hard day I do like to come home and take in a tape. When it's over and the screen goes blank to rouse me from my electronically induced reverie, I'm free to phone a friend or read a book—except lately, when I've been researching this story and soaking up as many as four tapes a night, filling up yellow legal pads with notes.

Picking up a local paper, I find New Yorkers can buy a VCR for as little as \$254. Friends keep coming up to me and asking, "What VCR should I buy? I'm finally thinking of getting one," they tend to add something sheepishly. But I don't blame them—the crown jewels of Hollywood (and beyond) are quite a temptation.

The major strength of the half-inch VCR formats lies in the amount of programming that can be viewed in them. In a few short years the program industry has created an array of choices roughly comparable to what the record industry created for audiophiles over the course of decades. There's only one hitch, and it's a blessing in disguise—you've got to be your own programmer. You must search, read, choose. Video's transformation of television has less to do with a pile of equipment or a flurry of format changes than it does with the viewer himself. Viewers have gone from passive to active status.

So everyone compiles his own "best tapes" list, buying the items that are likely to hold continued interest over the life of the current VCR formats and renting the

rest for one-night stands. How did I compile this one? I picked items off the shelf in my living-room, borrowed them from critic-colleagues, and asked program suppliers for a few dozen selections—defining "1984" as running from October 1984 through the previous 12 months. In a few cases, when I could not think of nominations for a major company by reading back issues of VIDEO, I asked for suggestions. From this body of material I selected only what looked passable to good and the final cut was made jointly on grounds of both technical quality and personal taste—one occasionally taking precedence over the other when appropriate.

A note on equipment: The monitor used was Proton's 19-inch 600M. Most of the movie selections were viewed in VHS, the format of choice for most videophiles, on a Quasar VH5635WW Dolby stereo unit. (Viewing in VHS Hi-Fi was a tempting prospect—but final selections would have been unfairly weighted toward Hi-Fi releases, which only began to appear halfway through 1984, so VHS Hi-Fi will have to wait until next year's story.) Most musical items, on the other hand, were viewed on a Sanyo VCR7200 Beta Hi-Fi machine—and without regrets, since most music tapes released last year came out in Beta Hi-Fi as well as lower-fidelity VHS Dolby stereo. Audio was fed through a 60-watt Kenwood receiver into AR 38 speakers and Sony MDR-80 headphones.

There's one other piece of equipment I haven't mentioned: me. That's why I'm writing this story in the first person—not doing so would be technically misleading. I suffered as much wear and tear as the heads on the VCRs that Quasar and Sanyo were kind enough to loan. But it was worth it to spend a few weeks worth of evenings with the country's most powerful medium and arrive at this moment of truth. And if you derive nothing else from this story, then remember this: you're the only component in your video system that won't be obsolete in 10 years.

The Envelopes, Please

□ Tapes of the Year: This highest award is split in half to reflect different weighting given to form and content. The **Best in Sight & Sound** is *The Bounty* (Vestron) with no ifs, ands, or buts. If you want to show your neighbors a monitor screen full

of vivid color, this VHS tape's blue seas and lush Tahiti landscapes would make the most convincing demo of any tape I viewed last year—comparable to one of 1983's winners, *Barry Lyndon* (Warner), though it was not the most grain-free tape viewed. And the Dolby stereo soundtrack does full justice to the synthesized fullness of Vangelis' score. Trouble is, the virtuosity stops there. Anthony Hopkins' Captain Bligh and Mel Gibson's Fletcher Christian seem to be motivated by nothing more than mutual dislike. They remain strangers to one another, and to us—mocking the epic story's potential for meaningful one-on-one confrontation.

So why not create a second category in which content reigns supreme and honor a title that's worth more than a single look? Call it **Best in Heart & Mind**, make *Terms of Endearment* (Paramount) winner—either because of the Academy Award or despite it, depending on your point of view—and savor it. Notwithstanding its visually unspectacular settings in Texas, Iowa, and Nebraska—preserved with a painterly eye by the finely tuned VHS transfer, despite a little extra grain—*here's* an epic, a family saga peopled by characters you'll never forget. Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger, and Jack Nicholson turned in three of the best performances of the year, and for every tear shed you'll have at least one really satisfying chuckle thanks to director James L. Brooks' warm, witty, humane script.

☐ **Funniest: Repo Man** (MCA/Pacific Arts). This unusual collaborative release lists Pacific Arts' Michael "Elephant Parts" Nesmith as Executive Producer, though the real *auteur* of this low-budget masterpiece is writer/director Alex Cox. *Repo Man* is a West Coast sci-fi punk movie, and as obnoxious as that may sound, there's an everyman quality to Harry Dean Stanton (as a quasi-official car thief who repossesses for the bank) and Emilio Estevez (as his 18-going-on-21-year-old protege). Another fine performance is turned in by the aging Chevy Chase (and just about everyone else in the movie) are after, though it's hard to drive with those alien nukes or whatever they are in the trunk raising the old wreck's temperature. It's a movie full of maniacal comic performances—I especially loved Fox Harris' lobotomized nuclear scientist at the

wheel of the Malibu discoursing on the delights of the neutron bomb ("eyes melt, skin explodes, everybody dead!")—and its reference points range from *The Jetsons* to William S. Burroughs (overheard in a hospital: "Dr. Benway to surgery"). It's also as good as any VHS tape I've ever seen, with a wide but controlled range of contrast, little grain, and excellent color (though the band-filled soundtrack, including the "Repo Man Theme" by Iggy Pop, should have been stereo). I watched it five times in two weeks while doing this story; sometimes it was the only thing that kept me sane. Then again, sanity is almost an irrelevant quality in this movie.

☐ **Shoulda Been a Contenda: Silkwood** (Embassy) has everything going for it except transfer. Meryl Streep turns in another moving performance as the Oklahoma nuke-plant worker ultimately mowed down by what many suspect to be a corporate assassination plot worthy of Kafka. The moment halfway through when her car runs off the road and she gets out to face not a hired killer, but her estranged boyfriend (Kurt Russell), in a startling dress rehearsal for the preordained ending, is one of the most wrenching but tender moments of the last video year. And it's not that the Beta transfer is bad—it's merely fair, and that just isn't good enough for such an important release. Color is too dull, contrast too inconsistent, *Silkwood* never shrinks from caring about its characters, and a movie about the need for caring should have received a little—just a

Top: Jason Robards and Georgann Johnson in Nicholas Meyer's 'The Day After.' Bottom: Pernilla Alwin and Bertil Guve in Ingmar Bergman's final 'Fanny & Alexander.' 'Terms' led the way in a video year of quality movies about the family—its sustaining power, as well as its threatened extinction by nuclear war.



to convince the unconverted. For those of us who love our systems, it's nice to give them the best we've got.

The Envelopes, Please

□ **Disc of the Year (LV): *The Right Stuff*** (Warner). Daring to be both patriotic and subversive at the same time, Philip Kaufman's epic and human portrait of the astronauts in the Mercury space program comes to life with each successive viewing. The humor is funnier, the splendor grander, and the characters more extraordinary. This is one two-disc set that's well worth the time invested. The sound, airborne and earthbound, is clear and sparkling, and the dark scenes at the beginning of the film are as good as they're ever going to get. This is one you'll watch years down the line.

□ **Disc of the Year (CED): *Manhattan*** (RCA). Here it is, on CED and only on CED: the Allen-approved widescreen original version which preserves Woody's intended visual ratio with grey bands masking the top and bottom of your screen. The choice of grey is inspired. You don't feel as cheated as you might've with black masking because it blends right in with the movie itself—the many shades of grey that Allen examines in the romantic human condition (as well as the tones between black & white with which he filmed it). All this and Gershwin too. Once you see Allen's compositions, you'll understand why panning and scanning would have enlarged the picture but diminished its beauty. Why amputate when a simple bandaid will do?

□ **Best in Sight & Sound (LV): *Pink Floyd: The Wall*** (MGM/UA). This is the only category where my own likes and dislikes have been put on the shelf, which is a good thing because I hate this movie. But there's no denying that, for sheer video and audio clarity, impact, tonalities, and closest approximation to theatrical projection, *Pink Floyd: The Wall* looks and sounds best. Animation by Gerald Scarfe,



sharply reproduced, serves as a fantasy image source for Pink's scarred, tormented mind, and Pink's live-action world alternates between mass chaos and isolated agony, between faraway long shots to incredibly close closeups, with sparkling fidelity. The complex, driving music score will lift you off your seats. (Honorable Mention: *Footloose*, from Paramount. It's easier to take than *Floyd*.)

□ **Best in Sight & Sound (CED): *Rumble Fish*** (MCA). There's not a speck of difference between the CED and LV versions of *Rumble Fish*, but the difference between this and other CEDs of last year—even the black & white ones, to be fair—is marked. Francis Ford Coppola's contrasty contrast to his own *The Outsiders* (named one of last year's "Best Tapes" by VIDEO) is virtually all imagery, and from the first drumroll through the difficult-to-manage color inserts this disc is a technical wonder. Stereo separation is extreme and surprising, and works well for the jazzy hot temperament of Coppola's movie. Visually it is almost possible to count the grains in the Universal logo.

□ **Best Transfer Quality (LV): *Zelig*** (Warner). Here's another black & white, but this time it's not clarity I'm impressed with as much as gradations of clarity. The key to Woody Allen's inspired joke is in its replication of the documentary technique he chooses to satirize in his portrait of Leonard Zelig, the Chameleon Man. This means attention to the physical details of filmmaking itself—aging filmstock to make it look like newsreel material, playing around with the soundtrack to simulate the tinniness of radio broadcasts, the sonority of the off-camera narrator, the scratchy track of archive material. If this weren't transferred perfectly, all of Allen's effort would have been for naught—but *Zelig* on laser is as truly inspired as it seemed in the theater.

Left, bottom: Alfred Hitchcock's 'Rear Window,' with James Stewart and the incandescent Grace Kelly, is the year's Classiest Classic on both small (LV driven) screen and large. Top: Woody Allen's 'Manhattan' is CED Disc of the Year, though whether CED owners will be able to 'mate for life' with their players 'like pigeons and Catholics' (to paraphrase Woody) remains to be seen.





□ **Best Transfer Quality (CED): *The Long Riders*** (RCA). This is a surprise, a movie I had almost forgotten. I had definitely forgotten its physical design, which director Walter Hill has proven to be his hallmark, whether his landscape has been contemporary urban (*The Warriors*, *48 HRS*) or period, as in *The Long Riders*. This movie is expansive and beautiful, with compositions carefully arranged and colors subtly chosen. It's about Jesse James and his brother Frank, and the Younger Brothers, and two other sets of siblings who were part of the James Legend. An opening credit sequence is breathtakingly photographed—and watch the credits as the names of the acting brother teams (who play the outlawed brother teams) dissolve into place.

□ **Best Sound (LV): *Don Carlo*** (Pioneer). The best thing that has happened to opera is Pioneer's sophisticated packaging of live productions, climaxed this year by a collaboration with New York's Metropolitan Opera Association to record its repertoire. Boxed with a libretto in Italian and English, keyed to the Chapter Search function of the laserdisc player, Verdi's *Don Carlo* is the first of what should be many spectacularly recorded operatic presentations. Here the voices are those of Plácido Domingo, Mirella Freni, Grace Bumbry, and Louis Quilico, and I can't imagine a Compact Disc with more resonance, tone, and impact. There is none of the "distant" feeling one sometimes gets from an unmixed live performance recording. Bravo.

□ **Best Sound (CED): *The Big Chill*** (RCA/Columbia). Though it may seem like heresy to give a sound award to a mono disc, this release deserves it because its considerable musical score is so well-integrated into the film. It's no great trick to come on great guns with the music; what's irritating is to have a great booming score

dissolve into a dialogue track that is ordinary. But the music in *The Big Chill* isn't mere punctuation, and RCA/Columbia's job on the track (greatly improved over the videocassette version) provides words and music with tremendous clarity, lack of echo, and absolutely no transition detectable between score and dialogue.

□ **The Classiest Classic (LV): *Rear Window*** (MCA). We waited a long time for this one, and it was worth the wait. Say what you will about 1950s color, this Hitchcock masterpiece escaped the curse, and *Rear Window* is obviously a soundstage movie almost totally impressionistic in visual style. MCA got the best print of an old movie I've ever seen and captured everything Hitchcock intended, from the fiery sunsets over a Peeping Tom's Greenwich Village to those luminous first shots of Grace Kelly, who presents James Stewart with the kind of screen kiss for which the movies were made.

□ **The Classiest Classic (CED): *King of Hearts*** (RCA). Philippe de Broca's comedy, which achieved cult status in the late 1960s, is set in a little French town in 1918. Some comic Englishmen and Germans try to figure out who's boss as Alan Bates, an Englishman who pretends he's French, tries to make sense of World War I. A quick reading of the above will tell you that language is important. There is much satire of nationalism here, and much of that satire lies in de Broca's decision to let everyone speak his own gobble-dyhook. It is a hilarious opera of words, and has heretofore only been available in a dubbed cassette version—which means *King of Hearts* really hasn't been available at all. RCA not only has subtitled it, but has used the black space beneath the masked wide-screen (yes, band-aids again) for the titles, creating a clear 2.35:1 ratio and easy-to-read titles below. What a simple solution. What a classy job.

□ **Best Concert Disc: *Dolly in London*** (Pioneer). Concerts are usually visually

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The kudos for Best in Sight & Sound in the LV category, the most technically demanding honor, goes to 'Pink Floyd: The Wall'—a powerful, wrenching, thoroughly hateful movie that surefootedly alternates between live action and animation, closeups and long shots, delicately wispy music and brutally driving rock & roll. It's a deeply personal tour de force—if you can sit through it.



TOP DISCS

By Harvey Elliott



Top left and right: group portraits from 'The Right Stuff' (LV Disc of the Year) and 'The Big Chill' (Best CED Sound). Remember those fabulous '60s? Bottom left: Woody Allen's 'Zelig' (Best LV Transfer Quality) shows that black & white can be a challenge too, but Allen's (and his cinematographer's) technical achievement flourishes under the laser. Bottom right: this 'Tootsie' (actually Dustin Hoffman) is the year's Best Collectible on the ill-fated CED format.

It's easy to become obsessive about "best" lists, and having never before compiled one, I reacted—when charged with the task of coming up with a good dozen or so prize winners—with the scrupulousness of a librarian and the diligence of a monk. I even tried to have a good time.

After all, I write about video because I love movies, and my leisure hours have been transformed by the technology that has made home entertainment a feast for the eyes and ears. When I watch my favorite films—and this goes for concerts, operas, ballets, and all manner of custom-made video product—I don't have to steel myself against sloppy out-of-focus projection, low sound levels, rude and noisy neighbors, and other hazards of moviegoing.

Sure, the telephone can ring, but that's why the pause button was invented (not to mention the answering machine). As for quality, the LaserVision videodisc produces a picture and sound roughly comparable to a new 35mm print—or at any rate, certainly closer to 35mm film than any half-inch VCR can come—and when was the last time you went to a movie theater and saw a new print? (The last time I went to a movie theater the print was just passable, and the manager left the lobby door open through the entire film, creating a rectangle of light on the screen.) Best of all, I am my own programmer. I can see what I want, when I want. If a Peckinpah movie

arouses my curiosity about another Peckinpah movie, all I've got to do is check out the other tape. I don't depend on the theater owner—and even the revival houses are ignoring Peckinpah these days.

There's an awful lot out there that's good. But the *best*? The absolute *best* of the year in videodisc releases? How to choose? Where to start? Who am I leaving out?

Let's be honest. There's no way anyone, not even the most diehard video buff confined to a sickbed for weeks at a time, can see every videodisc released last year. Accepting that impossibility (which is not an easy thing for a compulsive type to do), I went to the video producers—to all the companies that market LV and CED titles—and asked them what they are proudest of—which they think their best titles are, what they think is most "collectible," what (in technological terms) has been most expertly transferred, producing discs they could reasonably call showpieces. The release date had to occur between October 1, 1983, and September 30, 1984—no reissues were considered—and the producers could propose as few or as many discs as they liked without regard to category. Taking their cue from Academy Award procedures, they submitted titles for consideration.

I got over 75 titles: movies, concerts,



uncategorizable original programming. I was impressed at the refinement of sound and image to produce truly fine discs that are, in a case like *Gandhi*, a vast improvement over videocassette versions. And I was disappointed that, despite those advances, companies still released discs last year that contained major mistakes. What's the reason for that awful blue tint that infuses *Altered States*?—or the fiery reds in *Stripes* and *Under Fire* that bleed way beyond their borders? Why are the night scenes in *An American Werewolf in London* so mushy, and why does black look green in *Ben-Hur*? If these were uniform color problems indigenous to laser transfer, I wouldn't carp. But we have great-looking night scenes, controllable reds, and very black blacks in our best discs this year, so the problems aren't insurmountable.

Visually, I ask for a sharp clear image, color that reflects the creator's intention, and the best possible compromise (when necessary) with the varying shapes and sizes of image that sometimes must be whittled down to fit a TV monitor. And I want the best audio because LV is capable of it and CED is not far behind. When the soundtrack is silent, I want silence. Finally, what's on the disc is as important as how well it's presented. The collector (supposedly) doesn't just collect: he watches over and over again, so any valid choice reflecting a year's "bests" has to take into account art, artistry, and entertainment value. How many times can you watch *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*—even with a superb transfer?

The last year has proven that the disc is far from a stepsister to tape. Even in CED-land, where the writing is on the wall, there was vigorous original programming that's well worth mentioning. RCA brought us discs of the full-length *Man Who Fell to Earth* and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, unavailable in any other format, and has pioneered in preserving a widescreen aspect ratio for the small screen. And RCA has not labored alone. I have watched MGM/UA, for example, evolve from a company that first issued *That's Entertainment* a couple of years ago in a time-compressed version—so it would all fit on one disc—to a company that has brought out the uncut version of *Heaven's Gate*, a film whose commercial failure nearly broke



MGM's back. MGM/UA might not owe anything to Michael Cimino, but it seems to feel it owes something to the film buff who is shoring up videodisc sales with specialized, even esoteric choices.

If discs are lagging behind tapes in any creative area, it is in their deemphasis on older titles and foreign films. Far fewer foreign-language titles are on disc than on tape, and most of the few we have are dubbed. It is a shame that *The Return of Martin Guerre* is available only on a dubbed disc; aren't the people who would buy *Martin Guerre* in the first place interested in the original French version? (Film buffs can look forward to a dual-track disc of *Fanny and Alexander* from Embassy, with Swedish on one track and English on another. That might satisfy everybody, but that's next year. This year I felt deprived.)

As for classics, older titles are chosen for transfer to videodisc, while newer ones automatically get produced in all formats. When Warner, for instance, celebrated a movie musical month last May, the two most enjoyable titles—*Damn Yankees* and *Gypsy*—appeared only on Beta and VHS, while the disastrous *Mame*, possibly the worst movie musical ever made, inexplicably made the leap to laser. What would it have cost to bring out the other two as well?

CEDs with their still-maddening skips. Many of them look splendid—good enough





Nowadays, the best rock movies veer away from straight exploitation to tap into the comic potential of the audience's shared experiences. Alex Cox's *Repo Man* casts Emilio Estevez (top) as spokesman for the punk generation, while Christopher Guest, Harry Shearer, Michael McKean (bottom), and Rob Reiner (not shown) improvise their way through the history of a fictional heavy-metal band in Reiner's hilariously satirical *This Is Spinal Tap*.

little—more care itself.

□ **Best Foreign Film:** *Fanny & Alexander* (Embassy). Ingmar Bergman's big-screen swansong is a heartfelt tribute to the nurturing warmth of family life and, in its study of the "little world" of the arts, an exploration of the roles played by both family members and artists: it's an *art* to be a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, a grandmother, an uncle. And Bergman's touches of the occult suggest there just might be a little magic involved, too. The Beta transfer could be a touch more vivid, but fully represents Bergman's warm color scheme and gracefully crops the camera-work to TV proportions. Avoid the dubbed version and go for the reasonably legible subtitled one.

□ **Classiest Classics:** Once again I was schizophrenic and choose a pair of winners, though this time the split is not form/content but color/black & white. The **Classiest Color Classic** is Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (MCA), the first of five video versions of five theatrical rereleases of long-unseen works by the director. James Stewart plays the photographer who doesn't let the cast on his leg

prevent him from investigating a murder he suspects has taken place across the alley from his rear-window New York apartment. Hitchcock used the plot as a metaphor for his own behind-the-lens voyeurism, and the premise as an excuse to literally build a whole world for Stewart's amazingly realistic urban back yard. And the Beta transfer's colors remind me of middle-period Rembrandt just as effectively as the exquisite print I saw in a New York revival house. (See Harvey Elliott's accompanying story for details on the disc release of this double winner.)

Last year brought lots of great black & white masterworks into video stores. The nod for **Classiest Black & White Classic** goes to *The Big Sleep* (CBS/Fox) for its virtuosic VHS transfer of Howard Hawks' crisp interplay of light and shadow. The brightest sparks, of course, come from Bogart and Bacall, and if you haven't seen this one, now's the time. If this whets your appetite, CBS/Fox's new companion label, Key Video, has a good half-dozen newly released Bogarts in its "24 Karat Gold Catalog."

□ **Best Music Programs:** Organizing this category into what became four sections revealed how many approaches video is taking in packaging music. The **Best Movie Musical** category had *Purple Rain* (Warner), *This is Spinal Tap* (Embassy), and *Pink Floyd: The Wall* (MGM/UA) vying for honors; let the blue ribbon go to *Tap* for its sense of humor, but check out the others too for their spectacular visuals and (especially *Purple Rain*) fine transfers. *Sweeney Todd* (RKO) is the year's **Best Theatrical Musical**, and it's faithfully reproduced—from the unhealthy pallor of its London faces to its rich Sondheim soundtrack to its honest documentation of a theatrical performance (originally taped for the now-defunct Entertainment Channel). The **Best Concert Video** is an easy choice—the Police's *Synchronicity Concert* (A&M-I.R.S.-RCA/Columbia), an exciting show by a top band with slick



direction by Kevin Godley and Lol Creme, an audience that's as interesting to watch as the performers thanks to clever quick-cut editing, and four more songs than the original Showtime program. The **Best Concept Video** has to be *We're All Devo* (Sony), the only collection of music videos I've ever seen that redeems the essential tackiness of the genre by satirizing tackiness itself—as well as other, more insidious aspects of American life—with a subversive zest. Its Beta Hi-Fi soundtrack, however, is somewhat harsh. (*The Synchronicity Concert* sounds excellent in Beta Hi-Fi, while *Spinal Tap* and *Sweeney Todd* sound surprisingly full in VHS Dolby stereo.)

□ **Best Animation:** *The Soldier's Tale* (MGM/UA). Using R.O. Blechman's *New Yorker*-enshrined drawing style, Igor Stravinsky's ageless music, and a plot taken from Russian folklore, this is a cartoon tape that can enchant both children and adults. Blechman's stripped-down line drawings make a virtue of simplicity and a trademark of unsteadiness, but the animators alternate this starkness with bold splashes of color—most memorably and surrealistically in the imagination-defying sequence in which the soldier is seduced by wealth and technology. Visual reproduction is quite clean, and the score loses nothing significant in VHS Dolby stereo.

□ **Best Video Art:** *Koyaanisqatsi* (Pacific Arts). Visual quality is surprisingly consistent, ranging from very good to excellent, in this fast-paced cinematic rush of virtually every kind of spectacle that could be committed to celluloid: rushing water, clouds angrily raging in fast motion over a city skyline, skyscrapers, production lines, commuter crowds, and just about every other imaginable creation of nature and man (in that chronological as well as qualitative order). Director Godfrey Reggio first avoids human beings—then pictures them moving in masses, then individually in eerie slow motion, and finally in head-on portraits. The Beta Hi-Fi soundtrack does full justice to Philip Glass' surprisingly emotive music, which fascinated me so much in its commentaries on the visual action that I found myself taking more notes on the sounds than on the sights. This surprised me, as I've always detested Glass. Additional music by synth whiz Michael Hoenig is also seamlessly incorporated. Though steadfastly plotless, this audiovisual rollercoaster ride is consistently entertaining—often gripping.

□ **Best Thinking-Man's Tape:** *The Day After* (Embassy). This slot was created for Pacific Arts' 1983 release of *My Dinner with Andre*, a film in which a real-life playwright/actor (Wallace Shawn) sits down for a prolonged cinematic chat with an ex-theatrical director/raconteur (Andre Gregory). *Andre*'s triumph—and its contribution to my critic's consciousness—was that its premise rejected any kind of "action" outside of thought and language and thus forced the viewer to *think*, trap-



ped in something like a cinematic isolation tank. In 1984 a lot of made-for-video/TV productions (not to mention a couple of video-released movies) used a variety of tactics to make viewers think about the crucial issue of nuclear proliferation and its dangers. The one that provoked the most discussion was ABC's *The Day After*, and while it contains one fallacy that undermines it as an informational tool—the dubious idea that anyone could survive a nuclear holocaust—Nicholas Meyer's story, starring Jason Robards, deserves the award because of its influence. It needs supplementing, though, so also check out these runners-up. Helen Caldicott's *The Crossroads of Time*, a taped speech, provides a needed measure of information mixed with an equally needed measure of emotion. (It's available from Peaceful Planet Productions, 1705 Joy Ridge Rd., Box VM, Botega, Cal. 94922-0150; 707-876-3436). And I would also recommend Pacific Arts' *Whoops Apocalypse* since laughter is often a healthy response too.

□ **Best Educational Tape:** *Draw and Color Your Own Cartoons Right Along with Uncle Fred* (Cartoony Ent., 111 N. Westshore Blvd., Tampa Fla. 33607). Let's face it, video textbooks tend to be dry—and that's a crucial failing in a medium that is geared in the viewer's mind to providing entertainment, not ennui. So let's give Uncle Fred Lasswell, creator of the *Snuffy Smith* and *Barney Google* comic strips, the golden cup and some credit for recognizing that an instructional tape must entertain as well as inform. *Draw and Color* is two programs in one: it teaches kids to draw simple items on a kindergarten-to-third-grade level as any educational program would, and also entertains with good-looking animal footage, a little wit, and—here's the big one—lots and lots of avuncular friendliness. (But since I am mainly a movie/music reviewer and have not viewed educational tapes with much comprehensiveness this year, I would be interested in hearing from

Mr. and Mrs. Hollywood (all right, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall) in a still from the 1946 Howard Hawks suspense classic 'The Big Sleep': this year's Classiest Black & White Classic. This is how we'd like to remember him, and them—but if only he'd lived. . . .

continued on page 132

OUR FIRST ANNUAL THANKS-BUT -NO-THANKS



AWARDS

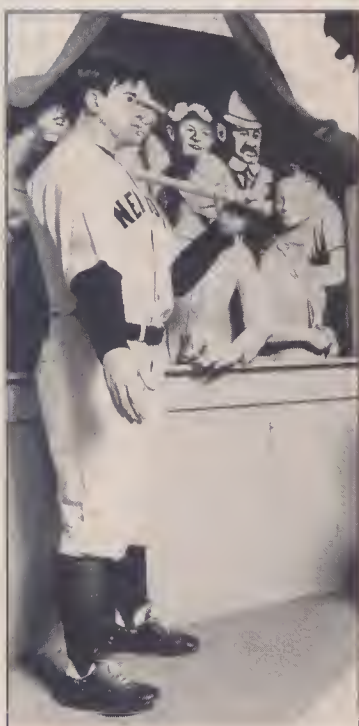
THE DREGGIES

By my own decidedly unscientific count, some four or five thousand new consumer electronics products are introduced each year. There are two reasons why there are so many. Inventors and engineers in the research-and-development divisions of major corporations are continually striving to make our lives easier—better living through batteries, so to speak. The second reason is money. Manufacturers constantly dream of achieving the Big Score.

So it's no surprise that there's an awful lot of reaching and bungling going on. Occasionally an editor will rush into my office with a press release and a smile. I know he hasn't

won the lottery. It's something almost as satisfying: a nominee for a "dreggie," slang for the dregs. Failure isn't required, or even desirable, for a dreggie nominee. Lots of good products bomb; lots of lousy ones sell. No, the essence of a dreggie is its ability to evoke a decent laugh. On that basis, two items not shown here might have made it for their names alone: RCA's Dimensia, which in fact is a good product but also reminded us how insane video can be. And "wireless cable," from the Microband Corporation of America. No comment. The virtues of some products speak for themselves.

BY DOUG GARR



Bionic Babe Ruth is this year's most expensive dreggie at \$170,000. It's a talking robot brought to us by Disney, and on view at Babe's Baltimore birthplace.



"Ok sweetheart,"

Bogie says in one of several Celebrity AnswerAlls phone tapes that imitate the voices of the stars: Marilyn Monroe, Wolfman Jack, Truman Capote, William F. Buckley, and Jackie Gleason, among others. For a singing message, try Ethel Merman or Carol Channing. Our favorite: Tricky Dick.





Baseball phone's here!

Yep, at \$59.95 you can slug away with your friends during the winter layoff. All 26 teams' logos—we suspect it will help the Padres call the bullpen.



A combo pickup truck and limo.

This \$55,000 gizmo will probably attract rich neurotic cowboys, and comes with a color TV, stereo, and wet bar.

Colored floppy diskettes. Tired of slipping the conventional black ones into your computer? Try them in 10 different colors, including burgundy and navy. They come in 5-1/4 and 8-inch sizes in boxes of 10, from Kelly Black of Fresno, California.



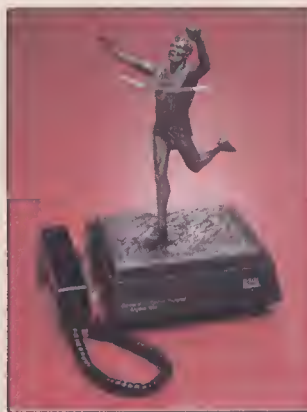
This tape's for the dogs. Literally. *Arf* was produced by, for, and about the canine set. The continual barking and awful puns bored me and my cats. It might be unfair that we didn't have a dog review this tape, but we couldn't get one to sit through it.



Computer mallet, formerly known as the Bit Banger. Here's a product for those of you who are continually frustrated by "syntax errors" popping up on our video screen. Compatible with all micros.

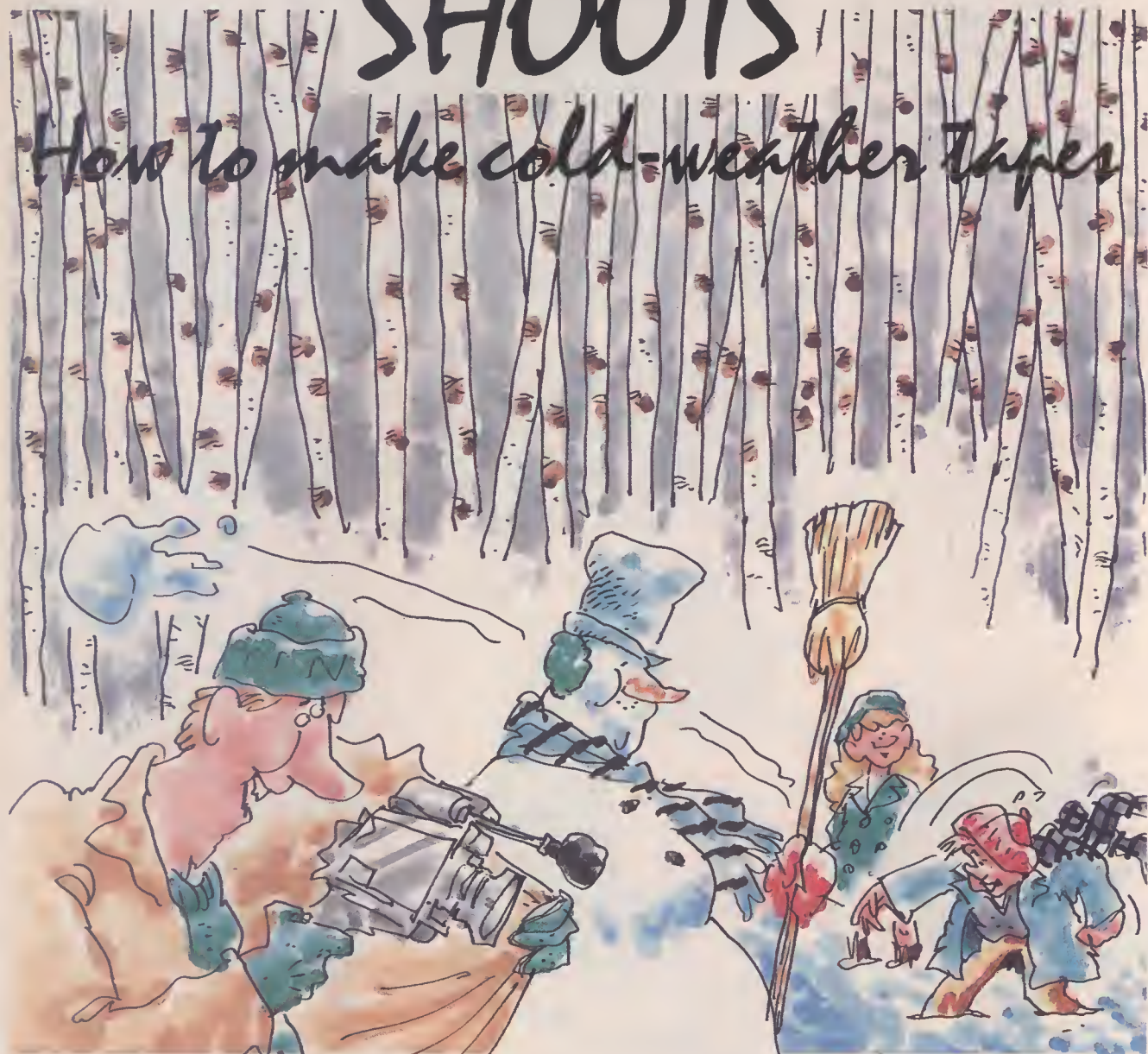


Olympic phones to commemorate the games. "There's never been a collector's series like this in history," boasts an AT&T ad, and who are we to argue? Seven different handsets are available, from the torch carriers to the classic discus thrower.



SNOW SHOOTS

How to make cold-weather tapes



Illustrations by Walter Gallup

By John Bishop

When icy winds have stripped the last dry leaf from the trees and the frozen ground is hard and dry under my feet, I wonder why I ever left the perpetual summer of California for New England's seasonal excesses. As my breath puffs out into icy air and my body is swaddled in a cocoon of down and wool, I think back on the languid days of summer when it was easy as apple pie to shoot home video.

The feeling passes with the first snowstorm. I wake up and find the landscape

transformed. Trees, houses, telephone wires, and shrubs are overlaid with sparkling snow for a fleeting instant before the sun starts melting the more delicate dustings. In a reflex, I grab my camera and go after some cool imagery to screen on hot days next summer.

The trees glisten against the blue sky, and I begin with some wide shots. The light breeze knocks clumps of snow off a few branches and they spring back, relieved of the extra weight. The birds are eating berries off the shrubs and pecking around the

bird feeder. They can't get too close because a squirrel is trying to climb down the string. His comical persistence becomes a light moment on the tape. The roads are not plowed, but I get to the curb in time to take a shot of the first plow clearing the road. The neighbors are shoveling their walks and trying to start their snowblowers. The quiet scene I began taping has sprung to life. I'll attend to my driveway after I've finished shooting.

The kids build a snowman—a process punctuated with snowball fights—and I

move quickly to cover the action from all angles. We go back in for breakfast. Later I take the video camera to the sledding hill and ride it down a few fast runs. Tomorrow the roads will be clear, the children will be back in school, and I'll have to go to work—but this day I shot some nice tape.

There are many things to tape in the winter. Skiing, ice skating, hockey, and other winter sports make exciting tapes. Point-of-view shots from toboggans, snowmobiles, ice boats, chair lifts, dog sleds, even a moving car make engaging video to be set to music. For contemplative tunes, the ice floes drifting down the river provide good images.

Video can also be used as an aid in developing sporting skills. A tape of a figure skater or skier will show strengths and weakness in their technique. A VCR with clean slow motion and still-frame reproduction can be valuable to athletes; a picture of what is right or wrong with their performance is like a good coach.

The hill down the road from where I live is never adequately plowed. There are minor accidents every year. We have appealed to the city council to no avail. This year I shot footage of school buses skidding through the intersection. The tape dramatized the problem better than any verbal description.

Out in the Cold

There are a few considerations to taping in freezing temperatures. VCRs are not designed to operate below 32 degrees F. Home video is a fair-weather pastime, and you must compensate in the cold.

The foremost problem is to conserve battery power. All batteries lose efficiency in the cold, and a power pack that will run your gear for an hour during the summer may last only a few minutes in winter. The



best solution is to use a battery pack that you can keep under your coat, heated by your body and attached to the VCR with a cable. The lead-acid and Nickel-Cadmium rechargeable batteries used with home video equipment should never be allowed to freeze. This will crack the cases and let

VCRs are not designed to operate below 32 degrees F. Home video is a fair weather pastime, and you must compensate in the cold.

the caustic liquids (or gels) inside the normally sealed batteries seep out.

VCRs are designed to operate above freezing. In very cold conditions, the rubber capstan and the rubber pulleys within the machine may become too hard to function and the tape will not move. Sometimes the tape itself will become brittle and break, though that is not likely with the polyester-based tapes used today. Both these problems can be remedied by carrying the VCR under your coat.

This necessitates wearing a voluminous coat that can envelop the VCR and still allow freedom of movement. I like to keep the VCR on my chest so that I can quickly unzip, reach in, turn it on, and rezip before losing all that body-warmed air. The camera cable runs through your sleeve to the camera. This is the most direct path and saves you having the cable coming up under your coat or down your neck.

Television cameras used to cover winter sports events are equipped with heaters to keep the prism optics from expanding and contracting in the cold, and to keep the oscillator circuits stable. As crystal oscillators get cold, their frequency increases

and they drift off the FCC standard. Consumer cameras have a single tube or chip, so their optics are not as susceptible to thermal stress as those in broadcast cameras. Their electronic tolerances are also greater, since a home camera does not have to synchronize with a network.

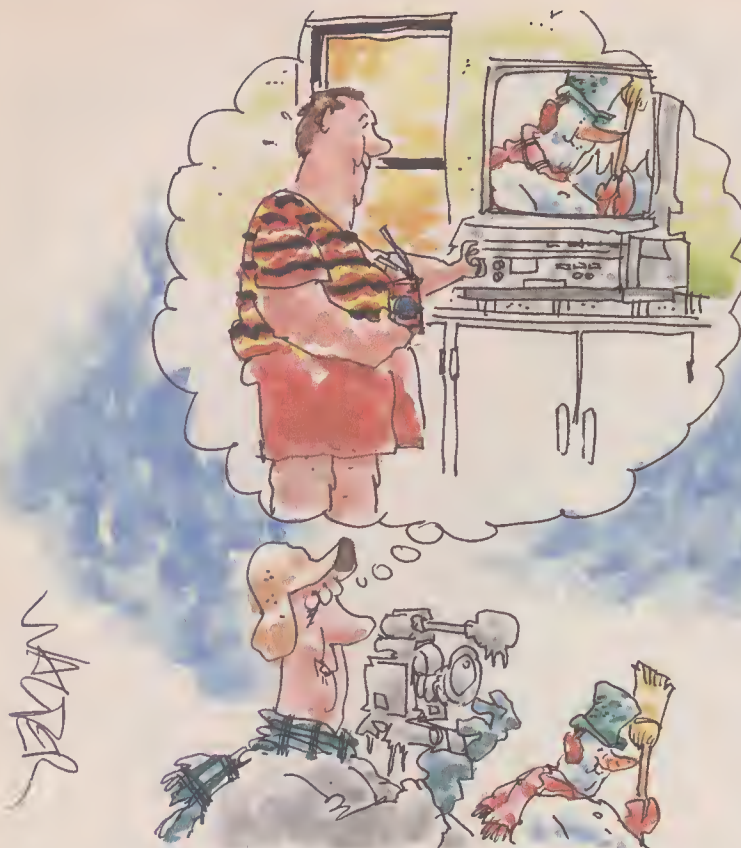
Water Hazard

The camera does have to be protected from water. When caught in the middle of a snowball fight, it is not enough to tell the kids not to throw at you. My kids take that as an invitation, with or without a camera. A dishtowel wrapped around the camera will keep snow from getting inside the camera, or in the lens barrel. Cloth stays on better than plastic. If snow accumulates, just shake out the cloth.

The cloth will make it harder to work the zoom and focus, but for heavy action like snowball fights or other perilous winter conditions like drifting snow, I don't want anything but prefocused wide-angle coverage. The children move around a lot and the camera has to move with them. To make sense of the battle I must be up close. This kind of camera mobility requires the wide-angle end of the zoom where focus is less critical and shaky camera moves are less noticeable.

"Condensation" is water forming on a cold surface when it comes in contact with warm moist air. The lens will quickly become cold, and if you breathe on it, it will frost up and you will be unable to get a picture. Condensation is also troubling when you bring a well-chilled camera or VCR into a warm house. As with an ice-cold drink on a midsummer's day, drops of water may form on all the metal surfaces, inside and out. You may even get fog inside the lens.

The VCR and camera should not be operated while this condition persists. (The dew warning on the VCR will prevent operation.) Avoid going in and out—that will cause the water drops to freeze, which may crack circuit boards. Rather than bring cold equipment directly into a warm humid environment (such as a room with an in-



door swimming pool), put the equipment in a tightly closed plastic bag until it warms up to room temperature.

Video cameras are not hard to operate with gloves if you limit yourself to the zoom, focus, and pause controls. Zoom can be manipulated either manually (by turning a lever on the lens) or electrically (if the


switch is big enough to press with a gloved hand). Focus requires rotating the end of the lens, and the pause trigger is usually large and conspicuous enough to feel through a mitten.

On the aesthetic side, the challenge of winter video is in controlling contrast against the brilliance of white snow. A per-

son skiing on a white snow-covered slope will be dark because the camera has lowered its overall sensitivity so as not to be overdriven by the white. Many cameras have a backlight button or knob that lets more light into the camera. The result is a washed-out white—but with more readable color and detail in the principal subject. You can get the same compensation by setting the iris on manual and opening it one-half to one f-stop more than the auto setting. Be careful not to open up too far or you will wash out the main subject.

Because white contains all colors, even moderately bright whites modulate the video signal to its extreme limit. Bright snow or a light-grey sky are worst for video. An equally bright blue sky, however, will only affect the blue part and not overdrive the whole signal.

Snow has some real pluses because it reflects so much light back at the subject. The effect is slightly unnatural, despite being entirely from environmental causes. The light pumps people up as if they were illuminated from within. If you shoot from a low angle so that the blue sky is behind, or with evergreen trees in the background, the subject will radiate all that diffuse reflected light. It creates a bigger-than-life quality that makes people look healthy and robust.

One of the benefits of videography is that it increases your sensitivity to the visual world. It helps you to see more of the beauty and wonder that surrounds us. True, it takes a bit of extra effort to get your gear out in winter—but doing so helps you look hardier, and rewards you with out-of-the-ordinary footage. 

SNOW SHOOTS: Dos & Don'ts

DO

- ☐ keep your batteries at body temperature.
- ☐ keep the VCR under your jacket to keep it warm.
- ☐ protect the camera and VCR from snowballs, falling snow, and water.
- ☐ preset the zoom and focus if you can't use them with gloved hands.
- ☐ compensate with backlight control or by opening the iris one f-stop when shooting against snow or a very bright sky.
- ☐ think about how good this will look on a hot summer day.

DON'T

- ☐ ever let the batteries freeze.
- ☐ continue operating the VCR if it freezes up.
- ☐ operate the camera or VCR when condensation has formed on the cold surfaces.
- ☐ breathe on the lens.
- ☐ take equipment from the frozen outdoors directly into a warm moist environment.
- ☐ lick the metal part of a frozen camera.



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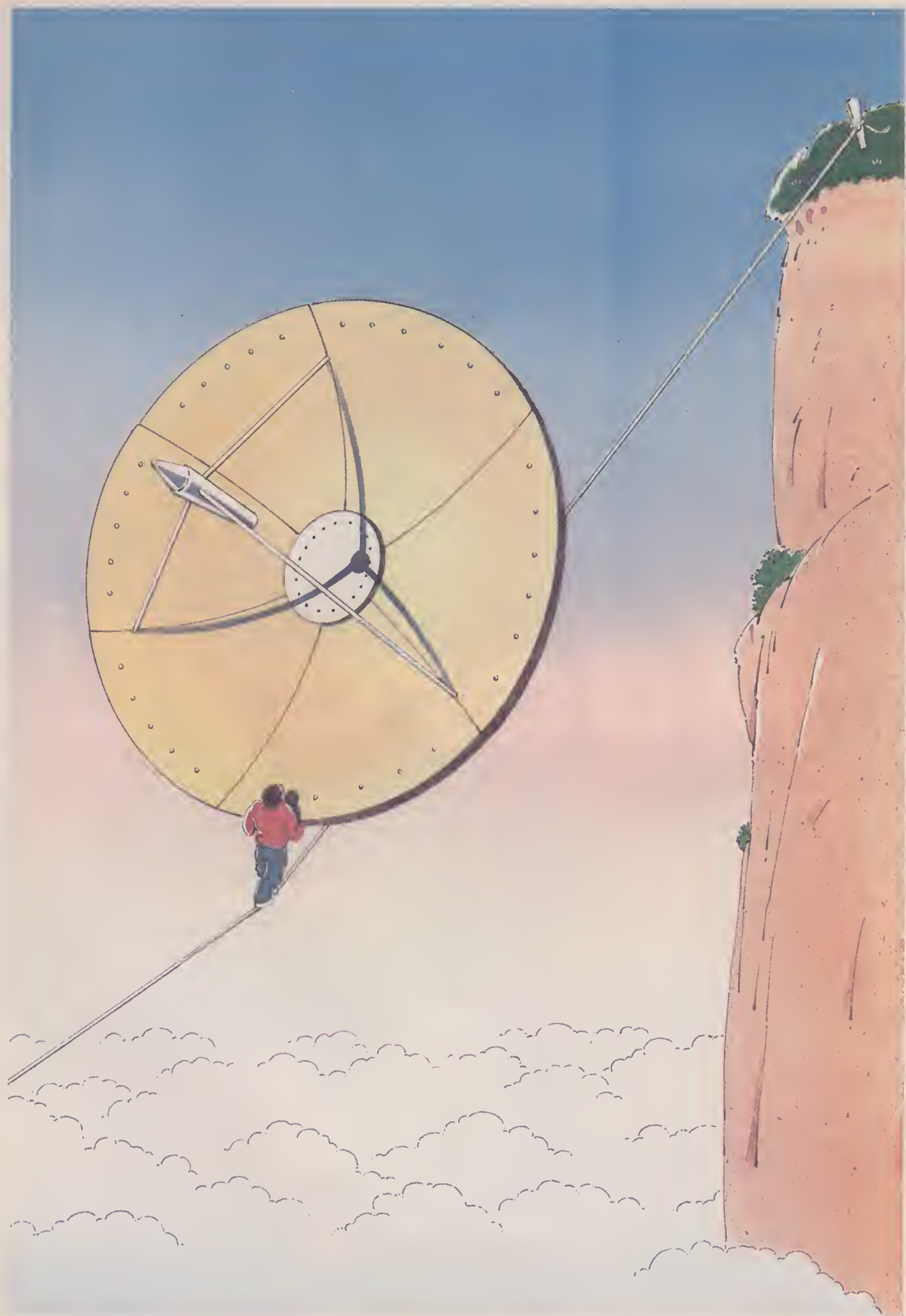
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Pies in the Sky

The ups and downs of DBS

By William A. Marsano

DBS—direct broadcast satellite—is in serious trouble.

The idea was worth waiting for: TV signals travel in a straight line, and the farther they must travel, the more costly it is to set up more links in the groundbased chain. But by aiming a signal at a satellite 22,300 miles up, you can relay communications across an ocean or continent in a single bound. HBO seems to think it's a good idea—the national cable movie service is prepared to scramble its signal so it can sell directly to the estimated 600,000 earth-station owners currently scooping up those movie signals for free. Real DBS, however—the vision of a system reaching millions of rooftop dishes, not as a supplement to cable but as a replacement of it—is facing a troubled present and an uncertain future. Here's why.

Two Ways to Go

There are two schools of DBS thought: Horsepower on the Ground and Horsepower in the Sky. The former believes DBS can succeed as a technical and commercial proposition using existing medium-powered satellites, advanced earth stations, and dishes three to four feet in diameter. The latter approach relies on high-powered satellites, relatively simple earth stations and dishes only two feet across (eventually, it is predicted, these dishes will shrink to 10 inches—the size of a pie plate). The problem with Horsepower in the Sky is that it requires giant killer satellites of 200 watts and more—and they haven't been built yet.

Rick Blume and Cliff Friedland, two communications visionaries in their 30s,

saw an opportunity to get into DBS first with Horsepower on the Ground. They believed passionately that medium-powered birds could be used in an earth-station technology improved and made cheaper by mass production. They believed dishes three or four feet in diameter would work and would sell to the American consumer. And to some extent they were right.

Their brainchild, United Satellite Communications Inc. (USCI), began a DBS system in Indianapolis late in 1983. USCI soon spread like a viral infection to other cities in the Midwest and East—Baltimore, Washington, and Philadelphia among them. Viewers were offered earth stations at about \$400 each and programming for about \$30 a month. The programming was five channels of what might well be described as “cable without wire”—movies new and old, ESPN, a UPI newswire, kids' shows, music and variety specials, and old TV shows recovered from the vault of the Andrea Doria.

To the astonishment of the Horsepower in the Sky crowd, USCI's system worked. Pictures fell out of the sky and turned up, crisp and clean, on people's TV screens. After less than six months in business, USCI claimed a subscriber base of 11,000. But after 11 months of operation USCI was, says Rick Blume, “at the edge of bankruptcy.” The money from its corporate backers was gone (General Instrument was in for \$5 million in hardware; Prudential Insurance put up \$45 million in spending money), and attempts to raise more turned up no new investors. When the company met with high customer interest, it couldn't get enough earth stations to satisfy demand—and then it had installation troubles. RCA Service Company had

the job of installing the earth stations, and according to Bob Brewin, the *Village Voice's* “Monitor” columnist, it was taking two men two eight-hour days to install each rooftop dish. Those men had to be paid. Figuring a conservative \$15 an hour for each technician over two days, installation cost about \$500 per dish. Even if you count the \$30-a-month subscriber fee as all profit (which it wasn't), a dish wouldn't break even for about 18 months.

In addition, there was—or wasn't—the problem of churn. USCI spokeswoman Edina Gillmor says “there is no churn in DBS,” but other observers thought the 11,000 subscribers tallied in March 1984 had quickly dwindled to a precious few, reaching a September-song low of about 2000 by early fall. Poor service and poor programming were blamed, but nothing can be known for certain: USCI will release no new figures, Gillmor says. Why? “Because it isn't everybody's business to know,” she says, adding defensively that USCI has been subject to biased and ignorant reporting in the trade press.

Despite these problems, USCI's Blume and Friedland deserve a laurel for a tremendous accomplishment. Relying on their own vision and entrepreneurial spirit, they put a DBS system into commercial operation three years ahead of the competition. They had outstripped, outflanked, and outthought corporate giants that spent more on lunches than Blume and Friedland were worth on their lushest day. But if new-school entrepreneurs got USCI off the ground, it was—Blume says with some bitterness—old-guard professionals who ran it into the ground. But that is another story for another time; for now, let the record show that early last September USCI entered into a desperate merger

with STC (Satellite Television Corp.)—one of the big outfits it had trounced in the race to get DBS into operation.

Act II

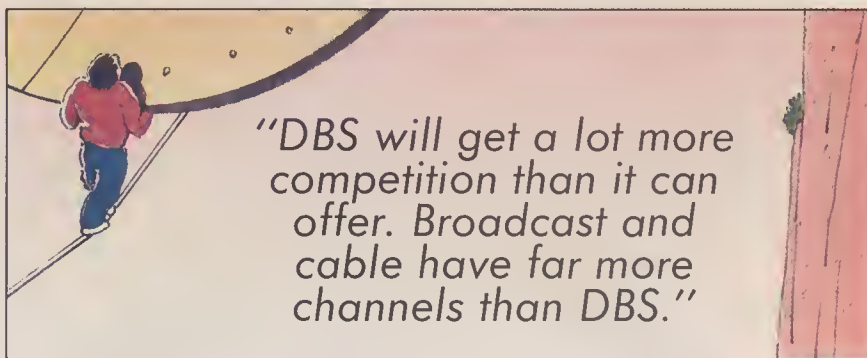
The upshot of all this is that the second coming of DBS—the sequel to this sad muddle—will not arrive on your screens until 1986 at the earliest. In the interim, the merged USCI-STC company will continue to service USCI's customers using existing medium-powered birds. STC, one of the proponents of Horsepower in the Sky (and wee dishes—saucers, even—on the ground), has two high-powered birds being built by RCA Astro-Electronics. When they are ready, STC's DBS service will be fed through them, and the game will have gone to Horsepower in the Sky. No one else is trying to do DBS with medium-powered satellites, so wait we must until the muscle birds are launched beginning in 1986. Mark your calendar.

Right now there are three players—permittees, the FCC calls them—in the DBS game: three companies permitted to have satellites built and to try to get into business. About nine others are in the wings, or in the early stages of the long paperwork process of getting the FCC's anointment.

The best-known outfit is STC, which has changed shape a little since absorbing USCI. Its principal general partners are Prudential (a USCI investor), Douglas Ruhe, one of the two owners of UPI, and Comstat. Ruhe's stake is his own—not UPI's, and just as well: UPI's financial trots have been so enervating that employees have been asked to take pay cuts of 25 per cent. Comsat (Communications Satellite Corp.) is the biggest player in Intelsat, the 90-nation telecommunications consortium that owns a gaggle of satellites over the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans.

The riddle here is why STC bothered with USCI. USCI had no money, and it would be hard to put a high value on the marketing and programming experience with which it accomplished so little. The merger does keep USCI's subscriber service limping along, which avoids the well-poisoning effect of having the first DBS service pass into history in fiscal ruins. Investment money for DBS is tight on Wall Street, and that sort of thing wouldn't help at all. It does clear up the competitive picture: by the time the muscle birds are ready to go, at least there won't be two incompatible DBS systems mucking up the marketplace.

STC, by the way, doesn't have much money itself and can't get much more from Comsat. Comsat is the pipeline for all satellite communications to and from the U.S., and for that reason is treated as a common carrier by the FCC, which has put a \$225 million ceiling on the funds Comsat can provide for STC. (That ceiling is to prevent Comsat from using the rates charged to its customers as a subsidy for a Comsat-owned company that could com-



"DBS will get a lot more competition than it can offer. Broadcast and cable have far more channels than DBS."

pete with those customers.) CBS was supposed to go into partnership with STC, but dropped out in July. STC has no programming experience—just a pipeline—but it does have two 200-watt birds a-building: STC/DBS 1 and 2, scheduled for 1986. STC will offer six channels, all pay services.

United States Satellite Broadcasting (USSB), based in Minneapolis, is largely owned by Stanley S. Hubbard of Hubbard Broadcasting, which owns three TV stations but is a legally separate company. USSB plans to go on the air with its pair of 240-watt RCA birds in 1988, but might go a year earlier. Programming VP Paul Heinerscheid says USSB will divide its six channels between pay and ad-supported services that don't cost anything. "We don't believe," Heinerscheid says, "that you should necessarily have to buy the dish *and* pay a monthly programming fee in addition. We come from a broadcasting background, and we have more of a broadcasting philosophy. DBS is the first frequency to open up to broadcasting since UHF, and we don't think it should be restricted to pay services."

Finally we come to Dominion Video Satellite of Naples, Florida. Dominion has two birds of 230 watts being built by Hughes Aerospace and scheduled for service in 1987 or '88. The company and its plans have been the source of considerable rumor, largely because the minions in Naples have been inhospitable and uncooperative with the press at times—and also because Dominion is a true maverick, determined to go its own unusual way.

Dominion spokesman Pelle Karlsson says, "We are targeting the religious community. We look at DBS as a narrowcasting opportunity for viewers who've been in many ways underserved. We have six channels and have filed a modification with the FCC for two more. One channel will be programmed by 24 leading evangelists—Robert Schuller, Jerry Falwell, all the people you see on TV every week." The remaining channels will consist of family-oriented entertainment—wholesome stuff of the sort Ted Turner, for example, loves so well. "We have been talking to Christian Broadcasting Network—they're not looking to put their service on the satellite but to create possibly a new DBS service. A new Southern Baptist network and PTL Club would also provide family entertain-

ment. We're going to have an educational channel as well, and news and public-affairs shows."

Whether Dominion turns out to be bland righteousness, as many expect, or Holy Rollers in the Sky, as some fear, the unusual thing about it is its planned revenue source. USSB and STC intend to make money the old-fashioned way—charging the monthly fee and selling advertising time. Dominion isn't interested. Dominion will lease out its channels at cost, just to pay the freight, and will be almost totally divorced from the business of selling time. What it wants to do, Karlsson says, is make its money from selling earth stations to viewers.

It sounds crazy at first—USSB and STC don't want to get into that part of the business at all—but it's not so crazy at all and could prove beneficial to DBS as a whole. After all there should be at least one DBS operator who wants to sell earth stations to pay for its system. With other companies providing its programming, Dominion will be able to concentrate on building a base of earth-station owners—and that gives the company an edge: "We think we will be the first to put a large audience in place," Karlsson says.

Once the birds are up, there will be competition. The size of the audience is fixed, within limits, and even the market underserved by cable—rural and suburban areas where homes are too far apart to be cabled economically—will not exactly be up for grabs.

Who's Running Scared?

Is DBS another threat to the networks? Roy Danish, head of the Television Information Office, an industry mouthpiece, laughs at the suggestion. "You've got to be kidding," he says. "I don't know what anyone's view is of anything they've never seen. DBS will get a lot more competition than it can offer. Broadcast and cable have far more channels than DBS is going to provide. I'd be edgier if they came up with some new forms of news and entertainment—but I don't think anyone has."

On the theory that like attacks like, that leaves cable as DBS's foe. Both provide the same kind of service: pay and ad-supported channels. The cable industry, publicly, takes the view of network televi-

continued on page 133

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latters laden with fried chicken and potatoes, spaghetti smothered in tomato sauce, cream cup-

cakes and chocolate bars spin slowly round on the screen. Oddly enough, these treats aren't displayed to tempt you. They appear as reminders of foods you should *avoid* eating.

The scene is from a 22-minute videocassette that was specifically created to help you lose weight. "Watch now, and start to say goodbye to the wrong kinds of foods," says the silky-voiced female narrator. "With daily viewing, you will watch your desire for fattening foods simply disappear."

A new kind of diet? An exercise program? No. This is a prerecorded tape that uses subliminal communication techniques to change your attitude about eating and health. About 25 similar cassettes also are available—developed to help with everything from learning to relax to improving your "sales power."

You Will Finish This Story

The tapes are designed to work this way: While viewing footage of, for example, foods, fatties, and sunsets, printed messages—such as "you can do it" or "eat less"—flash rapidly on and off the screen at regular intervals. The phrases appear too quickly for transmission to the conscious mind, but the suggestions, it is claimed, are absorbed by and anchored in the unconscious, where they act to alter behavior. The subliminal tapes are the newest genre of "self-help" videocassettes. They promise to help you break a bad habit or to improve, say, your memory or concentration—all with virtually no conscious effort. The companies say daily viewing usually brings about positive results within 30 days.

Some tapes use a combination of visual and aural subliminals, with audio messages hidden just below the threshold of normal hearing in the music or the sound of surf. For reinforcement, audio cassettes also are sometimes supplied. Others combine hypnosis techniques with visual subliminal messages and conscious-level narration. So far the most popular cassettes are those for quitting smoking or shedding pounds. They are 20 to 60 minutes long and list for about \$40 to \$60.

Ballyhooed as helping to improve life with little, if any, work on your part, the subliminal program presents an attractive proposition. Whether the tapes do what they're supposed to do is, however, open to debate. To begin with, mental-health professionals do not agree as to whether *any* type of subliminal communication is significantly effective in changing human behavior. Although numerous studies have been conducted showing that subliminal suggestion can work, many academics contend conclusive proof has yet to be introduced. "Lots of people say subliminal learning works, but there simply is no scientific evidence that these messages

Jeffrey Schrier

By REINA MEREDITH



are effective," argues Dr. Gene G. Abel, a behavioral-medicine research scientist and professor of psychiatry at Emory University School of Medicine.

As for subliminal home videocassettes in particular, it is notable that programs typically are introduced without undergoing clinical testing. Nor are most subjected to such studies once on the market. Scientifically, then, their efficacy goes unproven. Company executives talk only of "consumer feedback" and retail repeat business as indications that they feel show the programs' success. "It's purely on the basis of re-orders that we judge if the tapes are working," says Gary Gray, President of Innovations in Video—a Van Nuys, California manufacturer of a series called *Potentials Unlimited*, which includes programs to boost self-confidence and develop enthusiasm. A study performed after

**"Subliminal video
is a sloppy field
that's more art
than science....
Not even an art—
it's a ripoff."**

their introduction shows "an 89 percent effectiveness rate," mentions Gray—declining, however, to elaborate.

Another company, Self Improvement Video of Providence, Rhode Island, points to a research questionnaire mailed to its first 120 customers. "I have evidence that my programs are working," says President John R. Koenig, "because questionnaires come back saying, 'Yes, the tape changed

my life—I lost weight or quit smoking.'"

Still, Koenig adds he's not sure if it is the subliminal aspect that brought about the apparent change or another element in the tapes, such as hypnotic suggestion or "scare tactics," like the inclusion of graphic scenes showing lung surgery.

Indeed, some men and women who have purchased subliminal videos believe the tapes were instrumental in modifying behavior. Dr. Robert Thomas, an anesthesiologist living in San Angelo, Texas, calls one of the stop-smoking cassettes "an excellent supportive program." In a month, the number of cigarettes he smoked daily dropped from as many as 30 to 5. And Susan M. Ippoliti of New York City, who shed 10 pounds in 15 days, notes that the weight-loss tape she watched encouraged her to change her

continued on page 138

SOURCES

Environmental Video, Inc.
1731 North Sepulveda Blvd.
P.O. Box 577
Manhattan Beach, California 90266
(213) 546-4581

Innovations in Video
8444 Reseda Blvd.

Northridge, California 91324
(818) 701-1423

Mind Communications, Inc.
945 Burton SW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49509
(616) 247-1257

Self Improvement Video, Inc.
77 Ives St.

Providence, Rhode Island 02906
(401) 246-0810

VCI Home Video
6535 E. Skelly Dr.
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74145
(800) 331-4077

Videophonic Enterprises
Box 6191
Denver, Colorado 80206

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The first nine tapes are designed to help you develop or improve in each area. *Relieve Stress and Anxiety* is intended to guide you toward a positive self-image and help you gain control of your life. *Stop Smoking and Weight Loss* are meant to aid in breaking the self-destructive habits of smoking and overeating. Each tape, which uses both visual and aural subliminal suggestions, shows different ocean scenes. The programs are introduced by hypnotist Barrie Konicov, who produced the cassettes. To reinforce the videotape, a 30-minute audio cassette is included with each package: one side has subliminal messages recorded under a music track; the other is a self-hypnosis program for use while asleep. *30 min. each. Beta, VHS. \$40. Potentials Unlimited series, manufactured by Innovations in Video.*

Stop Smoking

Uses hypnotic effects and narrated "logical argument," in addition to visual subliminal messages, to help you quit smoking. The tape, which strongly warns of the dangers of

smoking, shows scenes from lung surgery. There are closeups of cigarette packs and ashtrays brimming with butts. *22 min. Beta, VHS. \$40. Hypnovision, from Self Improvement Video, Inc.*

Weight Loss

Uses hypnotic effects and narrated "logical argument," in addition to visual subliminal messages, to help you lose weight. The tape shows closeups of fattening and healthful foods, tranquil scenes, and a woman exercising to keep in shape. *22 min. Beta, VHS. \$40. Hypnovision, from Self Improvement Video, Inc.*

Improve Sales, Lose Weight, Money-Prosperity, Relieve Stress and Anxiety

A series programmed by family and marriage counselor Betty Lee Randolph, who introduces the tapes. The first cassette listed is designed to help you sell more; the second, to take off pounds; the third, to provide you with confidence in your money-making ability, and the fourth, to loosen you up. Each tape shows the identical ocean scenes but contains different subliminal visual and audio messages. Included is a supplementary 22-minute audio tape with subliminal aural suggestions recorded under the sound of ocean waves. *30 min. Beta, VHS. \$40. The Randolph Tapes, produced by Environmental Video, Inc.*

No-Effort Subliminal Weight Loss

Uses both visual and aural subliminal messaging, while presenting a "video fantasy" about two women: one overweight, the other "ideal weight." *20 min. Beta, VHS. \$40. VCI Home Video.*

Stress Management

Introduced by chiropractor Paul Tuthill, president of Mind Communications, Inc., who produced the program with Environmental Video, Inc., the tape uses only aural subliminal messages to help you relax. A succession of flowing streams are shown. Included is a 60-minute audio cassette with subliminal suggestions recorded under the sounds of rushing water and music. *60 min. Beta, VHS. \$50. Mind Communications, Inc., distributed by Environmental Video, Inc.*

Kaleidoscope

Slowly changing colored patterns accompanied by sounds of surf and special music designed as an aid to relaxation. The subliminal visual and aural messages have been recorded on separate tracks, one pair directed to the right brain hemisphere, the other to the left. The stereo tape can be used with mono VCRs, however. *30 min. Beta, VHS. \$60. Videophonic Enterprises.*

—R.M.



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January 1985

Pioneer CLD-900 LaserDisc/Compact Disc Player

Sharp VC-489U VHS Hi-Fi VCR

Toshiba CZ2084 Color RGB Monitor/Receiver

Epson Elf 2-Inch Color LCD Monitor/Receiver

Pioneer LaserDisc/Compact Disc Player



Ever since the introduction of the Compact Disc (CD) laser-read digital audio player, we have been wondering whether LaserVision man-

ufacturers would unveil a videodisc player that can play both LV and CD discs. With the introduction of their CLD-900, Pioneer has made this dream come true. Not only will the 900 play both LVs and CDs—it will also play a new type of LV which will have digital stereo audio as well as the current analog stereo audio. So Pioneer adds not one but two new capabilities and one new LV subformat with the release of this player. Though you're reading this in early December, don't go to pester your Pioneer dealer for one: he won't have the CLD-900 until about February, although a similar model, CLD-9000, is available in Japan (see "Dateline: Tokyo"). Don't ask your friends visiting Japan to get you one either, because those models are intended for use on 100-volt lines and our 120-volt lines will quickly burn them out.

To make this player possible Pioneer had to overcome major obstacles. CDs are not only smaller than LV discs, but they spin at a different speed, and have a different-size center hole. CDs are also thinner than LVs, so the discs' reflective surfaces are at different distances from the laser beam reading them. The laser must be refocused for each type of disc. To clear these technical hurdles Pioneer had to use two different motors to turn the discs at different speeds. They could have used fewer motors with gears/belts, but that would make the player less reliable. They added one motor for the servo mechanism that refocuses the laser, and four to make adjustments for spindle-hole size, tilt (disc warpage), tangential



Photos by Les Morsillo

correction (center-hole irregularities), and tracking the closer CD tracks. Many who egged on Pioneer to make this combo player did not dream of the complexities it would involve. We knew, though, that it would have to come from Pioneer because all of the consumer NTSC LV players currently available are made by Pioneer, no matter what brand name they carry.

One advance the new player brings to LV discs is an unprecedented increase in audio quality because of the new digital sound. Previous LV discs offered a frequency response of 20 to 20,000 Hertz with a signal-to-noise ratio of 70 + dB. The new digital-sound LVs will offer a frequency response of 5 to 20,000 Hertz with a dynamic range of 96dB. LV has always been the leader in picture quality for home systems, but with the introduction of VHS and Beta Hi-Fi VCRs its audio performance lagged slightly behind VCRs in dynamic range. LV sound is again the best available in a home video-plus-audio system.

As always, there is a price to pay for higher quality. LVs with digital audio tracks have a capacity of 55 minutes per side compared with analog-audio LVs, which can hold up to 60 minutes per side. Both of these capacities are for Constant Linear Velocity (CLV) discs. At this point, LVs with digital audio will be available only at the CLV speed. The difference between 110 minutes for both sides of a disc with digital audio and 120 minutes with analog audio may be the deciding factor in choosing whether to press a disc with digital audio. Many of today's movies are more than 110 minutes long. They won't fit on a digital LV disc unless producers are willing to cut out those extra minutes or go to a second disc—and the latter would increase the price. The alternative is an analog disc with a 120-minute capacity. We would prefer to have digital sound, but we're not sure whether we would prefer to lose 3 minutes or pay for an extra disc for 10 more minutes. Only time will tell what the market-

Playing Times for Discs

			Maximum Playing Time
Video Disc	LD	Standard Play (CAV) 30cm	60min./both sides
		Extended Play (CLV) 30cm	120min./both sides
		Standard Play (CAV) 20cm	28min./both sides
		Extended Play (CLV) 20cm	40min./both sides
	LVD	Extended Play (CLV) 30cm	110min./both sides
		Extended Play (CLV) 20cm	38min./both sides
		SPINDLE MOTOR REVOLUTIONS CAV: 1,800 rpm CLV: 1,800-600 rpm (30cm)	
Compact Disc	DIAMETER 12cm COUNTER CLOCKWISE LINEAR VELOCITY 1.2-1.4 m/sec.		More than 60 min

*Only available for CLV

Digital LV sound cost Pioneer 5 min./side.

ers decide.

Description. We managed to get our hands on one of the first U.S. models and were surprised by its weight: 35.2 pounds. That's reminiscent of Pioneer's first player, the VP-1000, reviewed in December 1980. In fact, it is not any heavier than separate LV and CD players put in the same case. The one we got was black. In Japan they are available both in black and in silver grey, and we don't yet know whether both colors will be available in the U.S. It is 6-5/8 inches high by 16-1/2 wide by 17-1/4 deep.

You might imagine that with all the unit's capabilities, the front panel is a mess of buttons and knobs. Well, it isn't. There are five buttons (of which two see frequent use), two slide switches that most will set and forget, and one slider control that you'll use only with headphones plugged directly into the player. There is also a comprehensive function display with additional displays available on the TV screen.

The buttons you'll use a lot are the Power switch and Eject button. You might also use the Play button to start things before you settle into your seat with the remote. The other buttons are the CX noise-reduction switch and the TV/(VDP) Select, applicable only you're using the RF output. The slide switches are for Auto Repeat, which we found convenient to leave on, and Video Disc Audio, which in its Auto position gives priority to digital LV audio unless no digital audio is present. Then it automatically switches to analog. In its Analog Only position it ignores the presence of digital tracks. This switch affects only LV audio, and you can still play CDs in the Analog Only position. Like us, you'll probably leave it in Auto unless you have some special need. Who knows? Program producers may even use the analog track for something like a second language one day. The slider is a volume control for stereo headphones plugged into the 1/4-inch headphone jack just left of the slider.

The display on the player itself is informative but Pioneer managed to keep it moderately simple by leaving some de-

tailed information to be displayed on the video screen. On the panel are a row of discrete LEDs slightly below the drawer into which you place the discs. Below the TV Select button is a matching red LED, and a green one is below the CX button. In the same row but farther right are red ones for left- and right-channel audio and to indicate CLV operation. As with previous LV players, you can switch off either audio channel and let the remaining channel be output on both audio lines. Near the center of the display panel are two seven-segment LEDs that can show the chapter number on LVs and track number on CDs. They are surrounded by legends that illuminate to tell you whether a LV (VDP) or a CD (CDP) is inside, and two others show whether the numerals show track numbers (TRACK) or chapter (CHAP). Other legends illuminate if the LV is set to repeat between selected points A and B, if the present track is set to repeat, if the disc inside has digital audio tracks, if the player is in Play mode, or if the player is in Pause mode. Other displays appear on the screen.

The back is even simpler than the front; although there are eight jacks, they are easy to understand. There are two F connectors, one video jack, two sets of stereo (right and left) audio outputs, and a multipin computer output. Up in the top right corner, near one of the bumpers that prevents the unit from getting too close to the back of the shelf or wall, is a switch for use only if the transit screws create trouble when you try to tighten them. (You must tighten the transit screws when you transport the player.) The top is bare but for a service hatch, and so are the sides except for air holes—but on the bottom, in addition to the air holes, are two transit screws and an instruction label on how to secure them.

The remote control is identical to the one supplied with Pioneer's LD-700 player (reviewed in January 1984). In fact, they are interchangeable, but the one supplied with the CLD-900 is black to match the player and has a few more legends that relate to its CD functions. It is 2-11/16

inches wide by 7 deep by 15/16 thick. At first glance it appears to have just seven buttons: an orange one for eject, and silver ones for Pause, Play, Multispeed, Still/Step, 3X Fast, and Scan. The last four controls are actually rockers that let you choose whether that function is to be in forward or reverse. Above these buttons are legends. Those that apply to LVs at both speeds and CDs are in silver; those that apply only to LVs at CAV speed are in blue; and the one that applies to CDs is printed in green directly on the button since it is the same button used for Step/Still and there is room for only one legend on the control surface above it. That button steps CDs to the beginning of the track that is playing or to the beginning of the next track.

The remote might seem to lack a few functions until you discover that a panel near the back slides forward to reveal another set of buttons. Farthest forward are three buttons that let you select both channels (stereo), left only, or right only to be delivered at the output terminals. In the second row is a rocker to select the speed at which the CAV Multispeed function will operate. The other two buttons in the row select points A and B for the CAV-repeat function. The B button also selects track repeat. There are 4 more rows that have a total of 15 buttons, of which 10 are for the digits that let you select the frame number in CAV mode. A double size blue one initiates the search function.

The remaining four form a column at right. Farthest forward is an orange button that clears the various memories. Below it is a black one that selects chapters on LVs and Index on CDs. The next button lets you select Frame in CAV mode, Time in CLV mode, or Track in CD mode. Both of the above black buttons are connected with the Search function. The last button turns on the on-screen display. In CLV mode, elapsed time and chapter number (if used) appear on the screen, and in CAV mode frame and chapter numbers appear. If you elect to search the disc by chapter time or frame, an additional line appears with the numbers you punch into the keypad. Those go away when the search is executed. With CDs, the screen always shows index numbers (if used), track number, and elapsed time. If you press the Display button you also get the time remaining on the disc. If you push the Display button a second time, the display doesn't go away, but you get a second display with the total number of tracks on the disc and the total quantity of recorded time on the disc. If you push the display button a third time, the optional display goes away leaving index, track, and elapsed-time numbers.

Operation. Simplicity and excellence are the two most distinctive marks of the CLD-900. One example is the way it connects to your system. If you're going to connect the player to your TV using RF signals, all you have to do is connect your antenna or cable to the connector marked Antenna and connect the other F con-

Sound/Disc Combinations

		LV Digital Sound Digital (5-20,000 Hz) S/N, D range 96db Stereo	Conventional LV FM (20-20,000 Hz) S/N 70db, Stereo
Playback Time of 12" disc		55 min. (CLV)*	60 min. (CLV)
Playback Time of 8" Disc		19 min. (CLV)*	20 min. (CLV)
Interchangeability	CLD-900	Digital	X
		Analog	X
	Current Model	Digital	—
		Analog	X

*Available only for CLV at this stage

Digital LVs have analog tracks too, so you can play them on other LV players.

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V

Videotests

nector marked VHS Out to your set. Then you won't need to make any other connections unless you want to add computer control to CLD-900 through the I/O port. (Remember the Video Vision Associates VAI-135 LV/Apple Interface, which uses an Apple computer? We reviewed it in our September 1984 issue.)

If you want to get better sound, use one set of the stereo audio inputs on your hi-fi system. We strongly recommended using this option. If you don't, you won't get the full benefit of the excellent sound from either LVs or CDs. Compromising the sound would be a pity indeed. If your system accepts video and audio inputs, you may elect to use those instead of the RF output. Then you may get better pictures. But unless your monitor produces truly outstanding sound, you'll still want to use your hi-fi system to get the best sound.

From then on, all you'll need to do is turn on the player, press Eject to open it, insert a disc, and press Play. If you want to enjoy the disc from beginning to end, that's it. You don't have to touch another thing until you turn over the disc (if it has material recorded on the other side). CDs are recorded on only one side, which can hold up to one hour of sound. If you want to search the disc or use another special feature, you'll need the remote.

Performance. On picture quality, the CLD-900 is as good as the best LV players we've tested. Horizontal resolution was 340-plus lines—which may not be the limit of the system, but the limit of the test disc we're using. The literature makes no mention of a video signal-to-noise ratio but the unit equaled the best measurement of an LV player at 44dB. As with all tests of LV players, that may be a limit of the software.

On audio we did two sets of tests. Those we did on LV discs showed a frequency response of 20 to 20,000 Hertz within -2dB with a S/N of 76dB on CX-encoded discs and 68dB on unencoded ones. Those measurements are identical with the measurements we made on an earlier player, so we think they may be the limit of the software. Note: We did sample two LV discs with digital audio: *Three of a Perfect Pair* by King Crimson (with digital sound), and a *LaserVision Demonstration* disc. A test disc for LV with digital sound was not available, but the difference in background noise between the two soundtracks was impressive.

On CDs we were able to verify frequency response from 20 to 20,000 Hertz within 9.6dB, but we were not able to check response between 5 and 20 Hertz because we did not have those frequencies on our test discs. The player's CD S/N and dynamic range were 96dB and separation was 94dB as specified. Total harmonic distortion (THD) was below 0.005 and could easily be below the 0.003 that is specified. In short, the 900 is every bit a grade-A audio player too.

Having detailed how easy the player is to operate, how helpful its indicators are, and how well its controls are organized, what more can we say. It could become simpler only by accepting voice commands and changing discs itself. It already does just about everything else.

Conclusion. We've hoped for an audio/video merger for quite awhile. The CLD-900 is a true switch hitter, equally at home with an audiophile or a videophile. It is also a fantastic performer in both areas. We thought that kind of Hollywood adjective would never make it into a "Video-

test." The CLD-900 is unique. No suggested retail price has been announced, but in Japan the equivalent CLD-9000 sells for \$1040. Our guess is that the U.S. model will sell for about \$1150 to \$1300 if it follows the pattern of other electronic products.

Test Report: Pioneer CLD-900 LaserDisc/Compact Disc Player

DATA

Date of test: November 1984

Suggested retail price: n.a.

Weight: 35.3 pounds

Dimensions: 6-5/8 x 16-1/2 x 17-1/4 inches (h/w/d)

Power requirements: 120VAC, 60Hz, 42W

Formats: LaserVision (LV)—CAV and CLV; Compact Disc (CD)

Play speed select: automatic

Still frame: CAV only

Frame advance (Step): forward and reverse, CAV only

Multispeed play: forward and reverse—3X, 2X, 1X, 1/2X, 1/4X, 1/8X, 1/16X, Step 1 (1/30X, 1 frame per second), Step 3 (1/90X, 1 frame every 3 seconds), CAV only, no sound during multispeed play

Speed play: 3X, CAV only, no sound

Rapid search (Scan): forward and reverse—120X+, CAV with picture and CLV with intermittent picture, no sound

Random access search: chapter or

frame, CAV; chapter or time, CLV; index or track, CD

Separate eject: yes

Counter digits: on screen (controlled by Display button)—chapter, and frame number, for CAV; chapter, and time, for CLV; time remaining, total number of tracks, and total time recorded, for CD; on screen—(not controlled by Display button) index, track, and time for CD; on player—chapter, for CAV and CLV; track, for CD

Counter memory: chapter number, frame number, start point A and end point B for repeat

Program start locator: by track on CD using Still/Step button

Stereo: yes—analogue or digital (if recorded, CLV only) on LV; digital, CD

RF input: 1, for switching purposes only

RF output: 1, switchable Channel 3/4 or RF input

Video output: 1, nominal 1Vp-p into 75 ohms; RCA pinjack

Audio outputs: 2 stereo pairs; Output 1 delivers both LV and CD audio, Output 2 delivers LV audio only; RCA pin jacks

I/D port: for connection to a computer, details not yet available; 8-pin DIN jack

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizontal resolution: 350 lines

S/N, video: 44dB

Audio frequency response: 20-20,000 Hz, LV analog; 5-20,000Hz, +/-0.5dB, digital

S/N, analog: 76dB

S/N, digital: 96dB

Dynamic range, digital: 96dB

Separation, digital: 94dB, rated (verified on CD only)

Total harmonic distortion, digital: 0.003%, rated; below 0.005%, tested (instrument limitation)

Overall picture quality: excellent

Overall audio quality: excellent

Ease of operation: excellent

Overall performance: excellent

Note: Test measurements based on available laser-read software are really a test of both software and hardware since we have no way of modulating the laser pickup directly. Performance of machine may exceed our measurements.

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Sharp VHS Hi-Fi VCR



Sharp has always offered unusual VCRs and its VHS Hi-Fi machine is no exception. In some cases—as with the Sharp 6800 (“Videotests,” May

1980)—the firm was so far ahead of its time that even we found that unit hard to use. Yet it offered search by counter number (entered on the keypad), a feature other manufacturers still have not attempted as a standard VCR feature. Sharp also pioneered controls in a pop-out drawer, a feature repeated here with a drawer almost as long as the machine itself. Inside it are a few extremely unusual features.

Here's one that to the best of our knowledge is unique—Repeat play. Buttons let you mark the beginning and end of a selection that's to be repeated till you stop it. Sound useless, does it? Well, our editors thought of a few uses without half trying: music videos, half-intelligible dialogue in movies (especially useful for a critic transcribing quotes), and the, uh, juicy scenes in a racy movie. The selection will stop automatically after five replays, though you can stop it manually before that. Using the feature is as simple as pushing one button at the start of a selection and another at the end. *Voila*—you're in repeat mode. Another useful feature is the Automatic Program Search System (APSS), which puts a marker on the tape every time you enter recording mode with the APSS on. Then the tape will stop at that point in fast forward and rewind as long as the option is selected. You can put markers on the tape at other points too, but you must be in recording mode. So if you must put



the signal on after the fact, you may have to sacrifice a second or two of material. There are other unusual features, but one we find particularly useful is that the tape-motion controls in that drawer pop out to become the remote control. If you're like us—always losing the remote—you'll enjoy having a place inside the machine to stash it. If you do lose it after you've taken it out, a set of secondary tape-motion controls is in a compartment on top and you can use that in a pinch.

Description. The VC-489U is a dark bronzy brown with black trim on its front, and most of the remainder of the case is a dark grey. It's 4-7/8 inches high by 17 wide by 15-1/2 deep, with a front panel that is uncluttered because most of its controls are in a drawer. Along the left side of the front panel is a volume control for headphones and mini jacks for headphones, left-channel microphone, and right-channel microphone. The microphone jacks are live only with the sound-source selector in the Aux or Mix positions, not when the tuner

position is selected, and it does not override the line inputs.

Running near the top edge of the panel is a blackish area that is divided into two distinct parts. The left side of this band has the front-loading cassette hatch with the Eject button near its lower left corner. On the hatch flap is an indicator that tells when a cassette is inside, and the indicator appears to move or dance when the tape is in motion. You can stop the indicator from dancing with a switch in the drawer, but you cannot turn the indicator off completely when a cassette is inside. At the right of that blackish band is a large indicator window with a few discrete LED indicators below, and running along its bottom edge are 10 numbered buttons plus Up and Down buttons for changing the channels on the tuner. In the middle is a power switch near the left end, and following it across the panel are the window for the remote sensor, indicators for the Hi-Fi volume level, volume controls, and the channel selectors on the border with the

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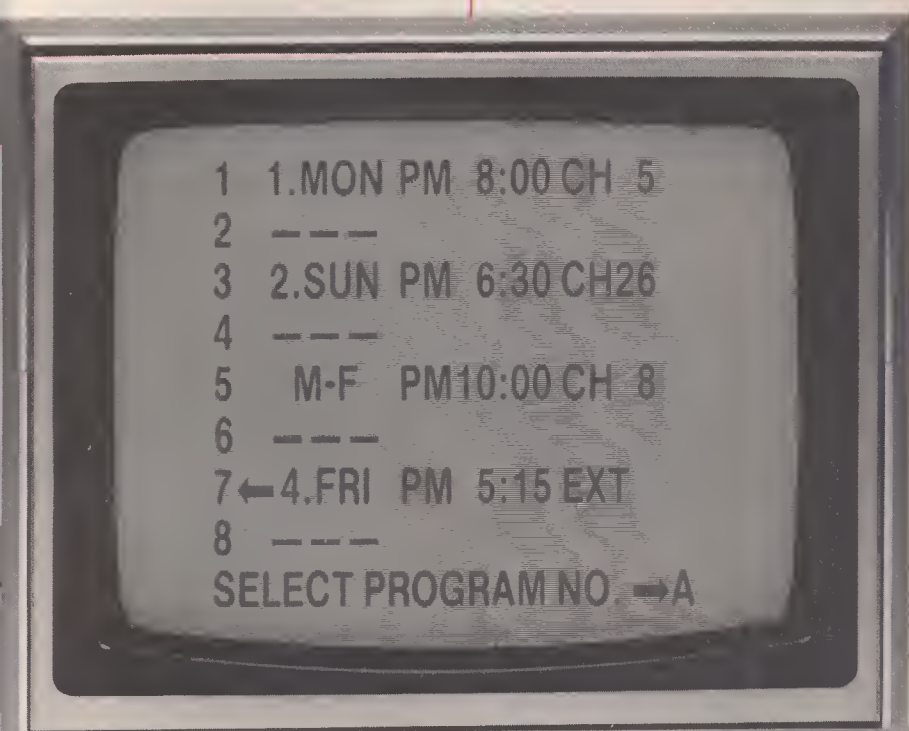
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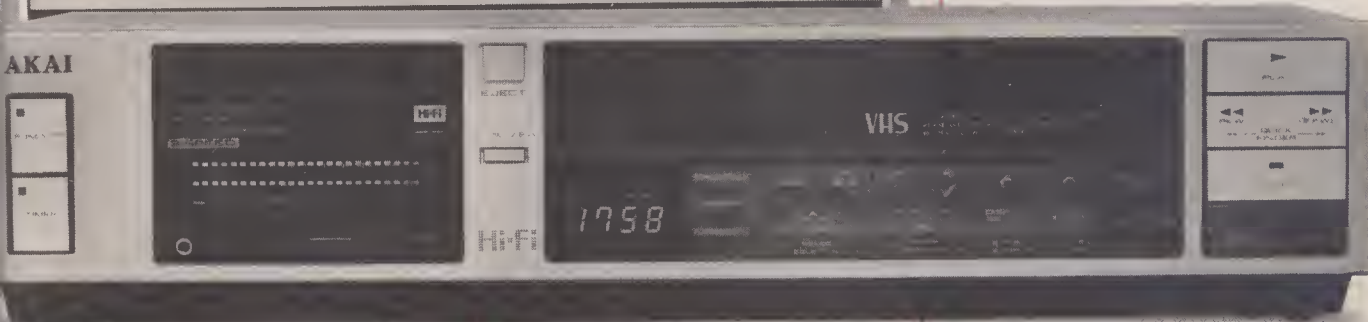


tures. In addition to incredible hi-fi sound and remote input capability, you get the flexibility of programming directly through the machine. Four heads provide picture-perfect record, playback and special effects. A cable-ready, 139-channel tuner provides 28-day/8 event programmability; a lighted tape area allows tape usage monitoring.

And if there's a power outage during the night, the VS-603 is one VCR you won't have to reprogram in the morning. Because instead of the normal one hour back-up memory, there's 7-day back-up power.

So if you're looking for the best in VHS hi-fi VCR's, look no further.

AKAI's new VS-603 is really going to open some ears. And eyes.



AKAI's new Hi-Fi VS-603 may well make ordinary VCR programming seem obsolete.

Because now, the combination of convenient full-function wireless remote programming *and* an interactive monitor system allows you to see the *full* menu

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What's more, the new AKAI VS-603 comes jam-packed with plenty of other impressive fea-

AKAI
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Videotests

black area above. The volume controls are for the Hi-Fi tracks only and there is no provision for automatic control of that audio. The sound on the linear tracks is always controlled automatically and both sets of tracks are always recorded. The only control lower than the brown band is a button at the extreme right to release the drawer, which slides out automatically.

Inside the drawer at left is the pop-out remote control. It has buttons for Power, TV/VCR, channel Up/Down, Pause/Still, Record, Stop, Play, Fast Forward, and Re-

wind (the last two double as fast-search controls), Reverse Play, X2, Frame Advance, Slow, and slow speed Up and Down. At the right side of the drawer, controls are fixed to its surface. The one nearest the remote is the pop-out release. The other controls are arranged in three rows. In the top row are a selector switch for the audio source and another to determine whether the VCR will record audio only or video plus audio (or PCM), plus others for Dolby (linear track only) on/off, audio output (Hi-Fi, or linear, or a mix of the two), audio-

channel output (left only, right only, stereo, or left plus right—mono), buttons for clock set and program clear, and continuous rotary controls for normal tracking, slow tracking, and sharpness. In the second row are switches for record-speed select, tape length (so the tape-remaining indicator works correctly), auto rewind on/off, APSS on/off, and dancing lights on/off plus some buttons in a box we'll describe later. In the third row are buttons for tape counter/length, counter memory, counter reset, auto repeat start point, auto repeat stop point and repeat engage, cue for making APSS marks, video insert editing, and audio dub on the linear tracks only—plus more switches in the box. In the box are buttons for clock, program, timed recording (equivalent to one touch timed record), (+), (-), and set, plus the timer on/off switch. Sequencing of what items are controlled by (+), (-), and set is automatic in program-set or clock-set mode.

In the compartment at the top are rotary controls for V Lock (SP and EP); buttons for rewind (search), Play, fast forward (search), stop, record, all clear (all memories), scan memory (add, erase, and memorize), fine tuning (up and down), and switches for auto/manual fine tuning, TV/CATV channel spacing, and indicator panel bright/dim. The bottom and sides are bare, but on the back are the power switch and an AC outlet; connectors for audio (left and right), and video inputs and outputs, plus one for camera remote pause. There are also screw terminals for UHF input and output, F connectors for VHF or cable input and output, and a switch that determines whether the VCR's output will be on Channel 3 or 4.

Operation. As you might guess from all the controls described, it takes a while to learn how to operate them all without referring to the manual. If you've operated other VCRs, you could guess at most and be correct. There are exceptions. We won't try to recreate the instruction manual here; instead we'll point out only the unusual. The major departure is that you don't have to press Play as well as Record to get into recording mode—just Record. If you press Play too you'll end up in Play mode. The repeat buttons are unusual, but the way they work is obvious. Getting accustomed to the APSS is harder. With APSS on, the VCR stops at all markers (cues) on the tape in either forward or rewind mode, so you must remember to look at the tape to make sure that it is fully rewound before you store it. You could avoid that by turning off the APSS as long as it isn't in use. The other unusual controls are the volume controls. The linear tracks are always fed their signal by an automatic level control, but the Hi-Fi system is always controlled by the front-panel manual level-setting controls. If you want to record in Hi-Fi, set them correctly. If the signal level is too high, you'll get annoy-

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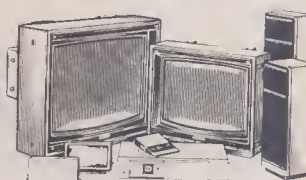
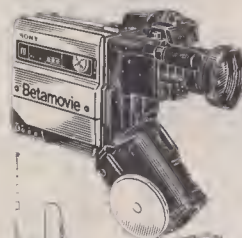
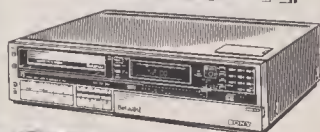
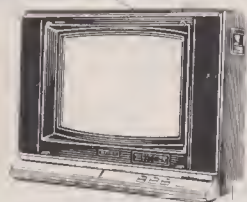
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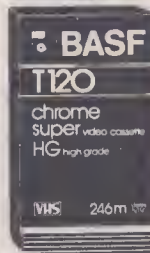
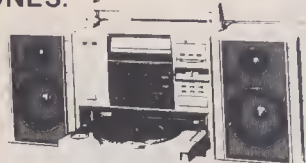
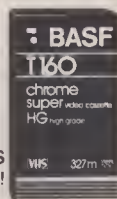
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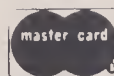
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Videotests

ing distortion. The other peculiarity is that if you are watching VCR output while recording, the output level depends on those control settings because the monitor circuits are tied to the Hi-Fi lines. It's a handy reminder.

Performance. The VC-489U is quite a good performer but has a few problems. In standard recording and playback it achieved a creditable 45dB video signal-to-noise ratio, but when playing back prerecorded material and tapes made on other machines, it could just reach 44dB.

Test Report:
Sharp VC-489U/US VHS Hi-Fi VCR
DATA
Date of test: October 1984
Suggested retail price: \$1400
Dimensions: 4-7/8 x 17 x 15-1/2 inches (h/w/d)
Power requirements: 120VAC, 60Hz, 53W
Tape format: VHS
Tape speeds: SP, LP, SLP (EP)
Play speed select: automatic
Auto repeat: yes (see text)

Still frame: yes, except LP (see text on this and all special effects)

Frame advance: yes, except LP

Slaw Matian: 1/5 to 1/30 variable from remote, except LP

Speed play: X2, except LP

Ropid search: see Cue & review

Cue & review: 7X, SP and LP; 15X, SLP

Visible FF & Rew: no

Fast forward/rewind: 4 minutes approx.

Remote pause: yes

Remote: IR wireless pops out from drawer in front panel—Power, VCR/TV, channel Up/Down, Pause/Still, Record, Stop, Play, Fast Forward (Forward Search), Rewind (Reverse Search), Reverse Play, X2 Speed Play, Frame Advance, Slow, slow speed Up/Down

Separate eject: yes

Caunter digits: four plus indicators for approx. time left in playback or recording mode

Caunter memory: yes

Program start lacatar: yes, APSS (Automatic Program Start Locator)

Audio dub: yes

Video dub: yes

Auto rewind: yes, switchable

Noise reduction: Dolby B on linear track only

Stereo: yes

Audio level: linear tracks always automatic; Hi-Fi tracks always manual

Hi-Fi: yes

Tuning method: PLL (phase locked loop) frequency synthesis

Channel selectors: 10-key pad plus channel up/down on VCR; up/down scan on remote

Preset method: add/erase from scan memory

Cable-readiness: 142 channels—2-13, 14-83, A-8 to A-1, A to I, J to W, W + 1 to W + 29

AFT: yes, switchable, but manual tuning (not memorized)

Channel lock: yes

Timer: 8 event, 14 days

Auto channel-change: yes

Accessories: wireless remote control (see text), batteries for remote control, stereo audio cables, antenna cables and transformers

RESULTS & RATINGS

Horizantal resalution: 240 lines

S/N ratia, videa luminance: 44dB; 43dB on tapes made on other machines (see text)

Audio frequency respanse: 20-20,000 Hz, + 2/-2.7dB, Hi-Fi; 40-10,000 Hz, SP; 50-8000 Hz, LP; 50-4000Hz, EP on the linear tracks at the 10dB points

S/N ratia, audio: 44dB, SP and LP; 41dB, EP linear tracks

Dynamic range: 82dB, Hi-Fi tracks

Audio distartian: 2.3% linear; 0.3% Hi-Fi tracks

Overall picture quality: very good/good (see text)

Audio quality: good compared to other Hi-Fi machines; outclasses non-Hi-Fi VCRs

Ease of aperatian: excellent/average (see comments in text)

Overall performance: good/very good

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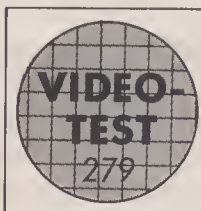
The clean front panel hides a control drawer that also holds the remote.

Although we do not like incompatibilities of any type, in this case we do not judge it a grievous fault because many VCRs can't make it to 43dB no matter what the circumstances. A little more annoying is that the noise bars and other kinds of noise are more noticeable during search and other special-effects modes with tapes made on other machines, including prerecorded tapes. Most annoying is the complete absence of effects at the LP speed except for search, and the LP picture is somewhat worse than usual. The Sharp shares this blackout of picture on LP special effects with some machines made by JVC and Hitachi. We would rather have mediocre effects than none at all, but others may prefer to have the blackout if they use LP speed at all. Horizontal resolution was the standard 240 lines.

The linear audio track is in the same range as other machines with Dolby stereo, but the linear tracks are completely overshadowed by the audio in the Hi-Fi tracks, as expected. The Hi-Fi tracks had a frequency response within 3dB throughout the range of 20 to 20,000 Hertz at all speeds and were within the format's dynamic-range specification of 80+dB as well. The linear tracks with Dolby noise reduction on were comparable to other good Dolby stereo VCRs. As for operation criticism, since you can get into recording mode without touching Play, we would have preferred to see the Record buttons better protected from accidental use.

Conclusion. Sharp has done well with its first Hi-Fi offering. Performance is certainly up to the format standards. It deserves a rating of good compared to other Hi-Fi machines and plain outclasses non-Hi-Fi machines. Its unusual control setup has a lot to commend, and some of those features—like the drawer—are being copied; but few makers have copied the other niceties like APSS, and none seem to have the repeat feature. So on flexibility and features the VC-489U is excellent. It is worth considering if you're in the market for a Hi-Fi VCR, though it is a smidgen off when playing other machines' tapes.

Toshiba Monitor/Receiver



About a year and a half ago Toshiba excited the video world with the introduction of the first Flat Square Tube (FST) TV. As the name suggests,

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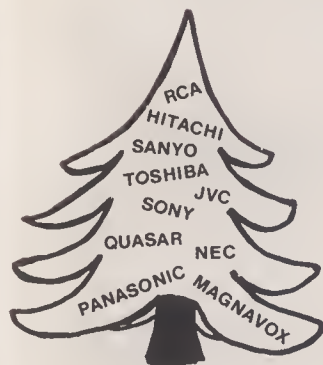
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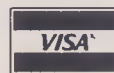
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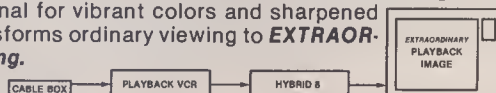
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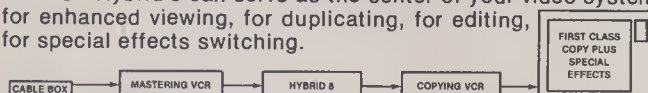
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Cable TV Power Connected as above, Hybrid enhances cable.

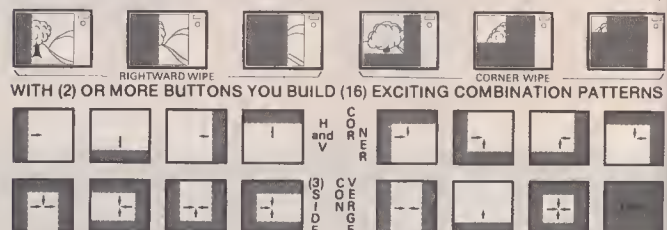
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New Stereo TV Hybrid gives you stereo capacity. With Hybrid you're prepared for future stereo VCRs and stereo TV!

Editing POWER Hybrid's (3) fader controls are super for editing home video movies (for example, weddings). Fade button allows alteration from full bright to black in a graduated way avoiding jerkiness between scenes and lending that dramatic smooth touch to entrances and endings. Duration control assures fade time will be perfectly even and consistent. X-CH fade, fades to black, switches inputs, then fades back in automatically!

Powerful New Special Effects Generator (No one else has it!)



And yes, you guessed it-Hybrid's Fade and X-CH fade buttons work with S.E.G. creating wipe to black and extraordinary X-CH wipe too!

Ease of Operation The new Hybrid is already developing a reputation for being the processor with the easiest operation. (Believe it or not that's not an unimportant consideration when shopping for a processor.) Hybrid's front panel is clean and legible. Rear panel is logically arranged. Our manual is written in

HYBRID 8 GIVES YOU THE POWER!

Enhancer Section (3) controls improve VCR playback, camera, disc, cable, you name it! **Enhance** improves detail sharpness. **Neg. Noise Amp** clears video "snow". **Color Balance** perfects color hues.

E/T Elapsed Time Meter Measures Elapsed Tape Time Exactly Selectable Minutes or Seconds Readout.

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Spotlighting

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Fade (remoted)

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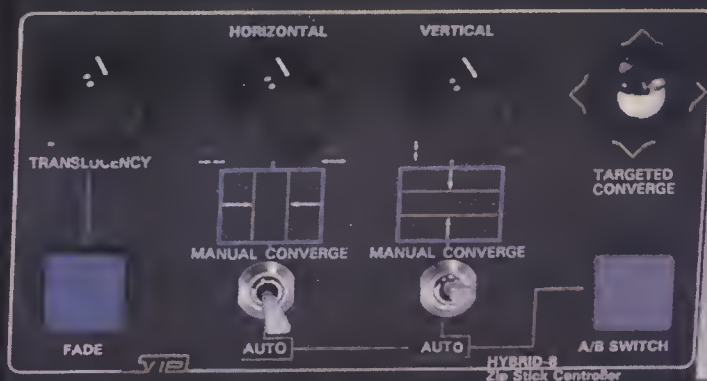
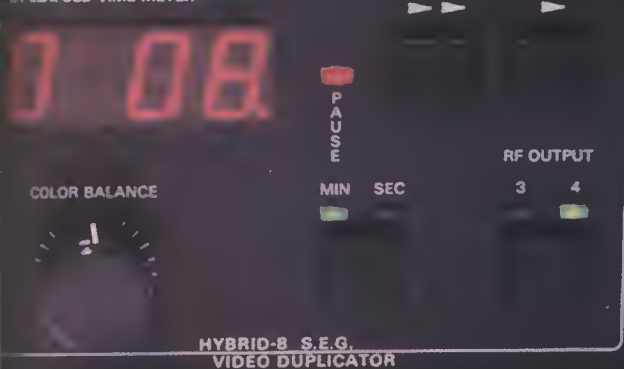
A/B Switch (remoted)

Translucency Control makes wipes translucent.

Manual Converge knobs permit manual adjust of wipes

Zip Stick Positioning Handle mobilizes effects

E/T ELAPSED TIME METER



every day language. No mumbo-jumbo you can't understand. You will succeed. Set up can be accomplished in record time. If there is a problem just phone "Mr. Hook-Up".

Direct from "Hollywood": New Video Breakaway Sustain audio from one source then (breakaway) switch only video. Film a dancer. Keep audio the same - while you switch video from camera (1) to (2). Sure, use your S.E.G. on the video. Breathtaking results. You're talking "pro" results. Only with Hybrid.

Phone "Mr. Hook-Up" If you have a connection question before, during or after purchase of your Hybrid, phone "Mr. Hook-Up" (our whiz kid hook-up engineer) here at VIP. He'll be glad to help "get you connected!"

Powerful Value In Video's Dec. issue, Hybrid, with its eight features was selected best video processor value. "The Hybrid contains one of the best image enhancers we've ever seen - this unit does it all - what it does it does better than any other unit on the market - we consider it one of the best buys in video." Henry Cohen, Associate Editor Video Magazine

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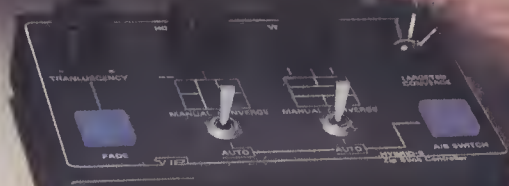
Spotlighting You're playing back a tape. You need to emphasize a person or object with a moveable field of light. Yes you can do it. Use "Spotlighting". "Shape" a spotlight with manually converged wipes. Translucency control accentuates spotlight/background borderline contrast. Zip Stick zips spotlight to desired person. Yes, adjustments can be made on the fly. Works great during taping or playback. Even use for live camera work!

Scrolling Control a long thin spotlight as it scrolls through credits. Dynamic effect.

Fade/Wipe to Target You need to end your tape by converging a boxwipe to a moderator slightly off center screen. You can do it. Use "Targeted Converge". Select a boxwipe on Hybrid. Zip Stick zooms vanishing point wherever you desire. Ingenious technique.

Video Bouncing Ball "Did you see that!?" Now you can point to "that", "bouncing ball" style. Zip Stick instantly zips white dot to object of interest. *Creates Great Excitement!*

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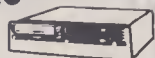




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Videotests



left square to avoid losing information. In August 1983 we reviewed Toshiba's CZ2010, the first TV to use an FST. It was a monitor/receiver with a number of interesting features. Now Toshiba offers the CZ2084, which has all the same features plus a built-in decoder for broadcast multichannel sound and an input to accept RGB signals from a computer.

To drive FST picture tubes correctly, new circuits had to be devised to keep the electron beam that traces the lines across the screen from creating geometric distortion or losing focus. The mechanical design of older curved tubes insured that the electron beam traveled the same distance between the electron gun and any point on the phosphor screen—automatically maintaining the same focus. The electron beam also moved across the screen at an even speed, and the older curved tube took care of maintaining correct geometric positioning of objects on the screen. With the new FSTs, the electron beam must move more slowly across the center of the tube to maintain the correct geometric position and shape of objects. The beam also travels shorter distances to the tube face as it gets closer to the center of the tube, so its focus must be continually altered to keep the image in focus. That may sound difficult, but the picture appears more natural and less of it is cut off from view. Most other manufacturers think so highly of the design's benefits that they are producing, or will produce, flatter squarer tubes.

Of the features that Toshiba added with the introduction of the CZ2084, the MTS capability is most interesting. More stations are broadcasting stereo and Second

Audio Program (SAP) as the months go by, and many people buying new sets want that feature because stereo TV broadcasts will come to their area long before it is time to buy a new TV. The other major new feature, RGB input, is useful for computers as well as teletext (though the latter's growth is slow, it will be available in your area sooner or later). Some teletext decoders use an RGB output, and your TV will need an RGB input for those. Study your current and future needs before dismissing that feature as one you couldn't use.

Description. The 2084 is a dead ringer for the earlier 2010. Not only are they the same size and shape—even the controls and indicators are in the same position. The only difference is in what the three discrete indicators at top left show. The unit is silver grey and measures 18-1/8 inches high by 19-3/4 wide by 18-5/8 deep. Along the top and sides is a very narrow silver strip. Within those boundaries is the protective glass covering the picture tube, surrounded by a black frame. Inset in this black frame at top left is a window through which the channel numbers or video input (E1, E2, or E3) selected is displayed. There are three indicators to the right of the window. In this model they show when the RGB input is selected, whether the broadcast is in stereo, and whether audio is broadcast on the SAP. The stereo and SAP indicators light red if such signals are broadcast, and the color changes to green if you select that option. On this set it is possible to listen to both main sound output and SAP at the same time—but not stereo and SAP, so both lights won't show green at the same time.

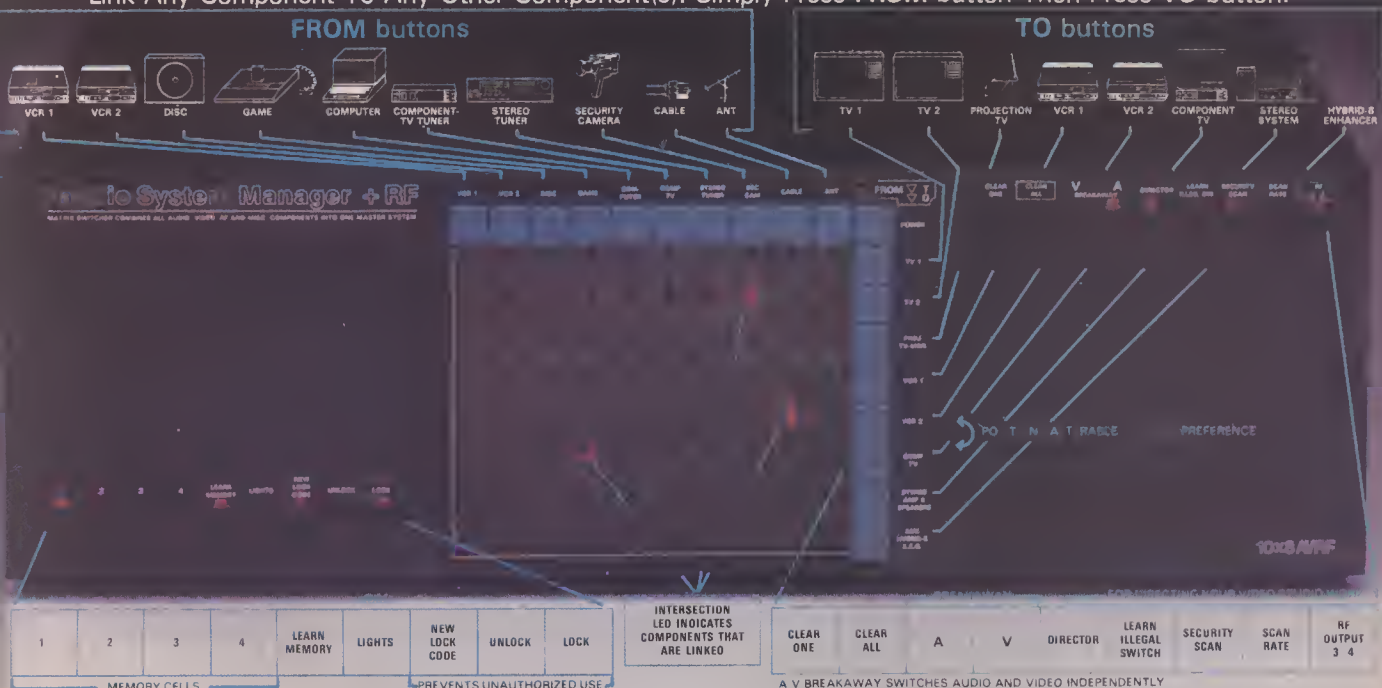
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Videotests

The silver area below the screen contains a pair of speakers (2 by 3-1/2 inches), the detachable remote control, and a set of jacks and switches. The speakers are hidden behind grilles that disguise their true size and are located at the extreme right and left of this lower area. Between them is the remote control which becomes part of the front panel when lodged in its recess. When the remote is removed, a spring-loaded door pops out to fill its place. To the right of the remote is the main power button, and below the remote are jacks for stereo audio and video input E3, stereo audio and video output from the tuner, a stereo headphone jack, and a TV/video selector that is a duplicate of the one on the remote. On the remote are 10 keys for random-access channel selection, up and down buttons for volume and scan tuning, mute, stereo/SAP select, TV/video select, and power. The stereo/SAP button is active only if the audio selector switch on the side is set to remote, and the TV/video button cycles through the sequence TV, E1, E2, E3, TV, and so on endlessly.

The top and bottom are bare and so is the left side except for a handheld depression. On the right side, in addition to the other handheld, is a tall skinny door. It's hinged at the rear and swings outward to look like a forward-tilted ear flap. On the inside of the door is a label to match controls in the compartment. They are on a panel angled for easy operation and arranged in a column, with three pushbuttons at the top. The remainder are rotary controls. The two top buttons are auxiliary up/down channel-scan controls for use if you have misplaced the remote. Below

them is an on/off RGB-input select. In its off position you may select any of the video or TV functions using either the button on the front panel or on the remote—but if it is on (in RGB mode), the other controls are disabled until the RGB selector is turned off again.

Below the pushbuttons are a set of 11 rotary controls with volume at the top. Next down is a rotary switch for selecting the TV audio source. Going counterclockwise there are positions for Mono, mono TV audio on the left speaker and SAP on the right one, SAP only, stereo (broadcast), and remote. In the remote position, control is transferred to a button on the remote which lets you choose between stereo and SAP. The button on the remote does not let you select mono or the mix of SAP and mono. As with all stereo TVs we've seen, if a program is broadcast in mono, the mono material is fed to both speakers even if the switch on the TV is set to stereo. Toshiba's instructions and labeling refer to this switch as MCTS—for Multichannel Television Sound, but in U.S. the normal acronym is MTS. The remaining rotary controls in the column are all familiar ones though a few seem like escapees from a hi-fi system. They are brightness, tint, color, contrast, bass, treble, balance, vertical hold, and sharpness. Two of them have pull-out positions. Pulling out the brightness knob switches to the CATV tuning sequence, and pulling out the contrast control activates Automatic Balanced Color (ABC).

The back of the monitor/receiver looks a bit like the earlier CZ2010 too. In fact, there is only one addition and a small rear-

Test Report: Toshiba CZ2084 Color/RGB Monitor Receiver

DATA

Date of test: October 1984

Suggested retail price: n.a.

Dimensions: 18-1/8 x 19-3/4 x 18-5/8 inches (h/w/d)

Power requirements: 120V, 60Hz, 87W

Screen size: 20 inches measured diagonally; FST—Flat Square Tube

Speaker size: two—2 x 3-1/2 inches (stereo)

Type of tuning: frequency synthesis

Method of tuning: keypad random access plus up/down scan that automatically skips channels with no signals

Cable readiness: 133 channels—2 to 13, 14 to 83, A to I, J to W, AA to ZZ, A-1 and A-2

Remote control: IR wireless that pops out of front panel, with power, TV/video, stereo/SAP, volume up/down, mute, channel up/down scan, 10-key pad for direct channel access

Video/Stereo audio inputs: 3 (one on front panel)

Video/Stereo audio output: 1 (rear panel)

Video/Stereo audio tuner output: 1 (front panel)

Auxiliary stereo audio output: 1 (rear panel)

Headphone jack: 1 1/4-inch phone type (front panel)

External speaker connectors: 1 stereo set (rear panel)

Internal audio amplifier power: 5 watts per channel

RESULTS & RATINGS

Picture sharpness: 340+ lines horizontal resolution on video input, measured; 400 lines (80 characters) RGB input, rated

Snowiness; S/N, luminance: 51dB measured

Accuracy of colors: very good with slight fringing on the right side of the screen

Convergence: average (excellent on left side and center, average to weak on the right side—may be corrected by technician)

Overall picture quality: good/very good out of box, may be excellent if technician adjusts convergence

Overall audio performance: average on internal speakers; very good on external speakers (see text)

Ease of operation: excellent but for one small quibble (see text)

Overall performance: very good

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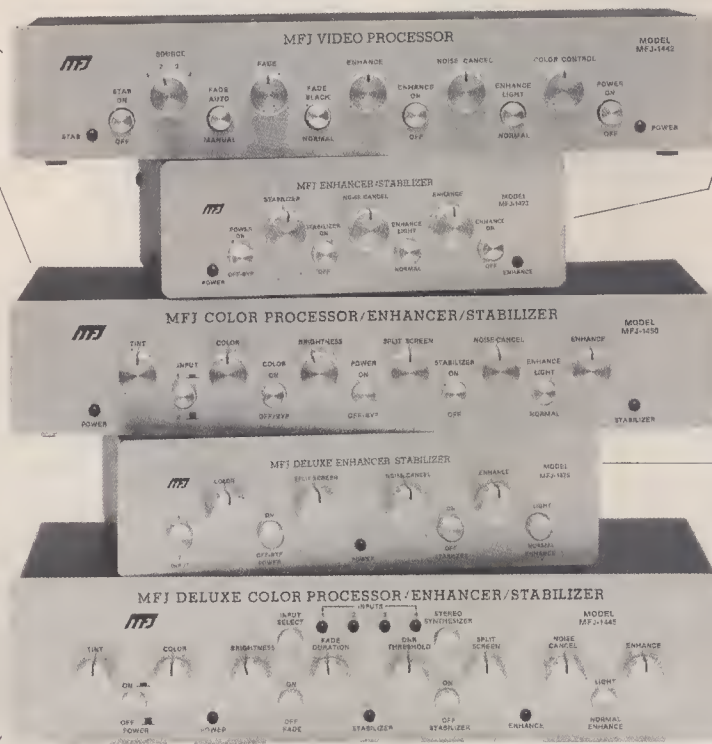
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Videotests

range. The newcomer is the eight-pin RGB connector which now occupies the bottom left corner of the jack panel. The internal/external speaker switch has now moved to just above the external speaker terminals, which are in the bottom right corner. In the top right of the panel are the VHF and UHF inputs. Most of the left side remains the same with video and matching stereo audio inputs for video 1 (E1) and video 2 (E2), video and stereo audio outputs of the selected viewing channel, and an extra set of stereo audio outputs to feed line-level audio to your hi-fi system. Near the top of the back panel is a slot for holding the supplied rabbit-ears antenna.

Operation. The operation of the 2084 is straightforward, but the bells and whistles make your life easier. Firstly, the remote can be operated and stored as a part of the front panel. We don't know how careful you are, but we seem to be always hunting for remote controls. They seem to get up and walk away from where you last left them. Some of our friends have even taken to fastening them to the underside of the coffee table with velcro. Toshiba has been making them as front-panel pop-outs for a few years and it seems to help. You must, however, get into the habit of putting them back there. We adapt to that quickly and then do less hunting. The designers have also managed to back up all the controls someplace on the set, except for mute and random-access station selection. The remote itself offers all the standard options plus video-input selection and choosing whether you'll hear the audio that matches the picture or the SAP channels. That last one we've seen on only a few stereo models, so we don't know whether that will become standard.

The stereo switching is a bit more complete than we've seen on competing models. It offers a position in which the normal matching audio comes through on the left channel and the SAP on the right. Sounds crazy—but one optional use of the SAP is for a translation of the normal audio. Another is that only the dialogue will appear on the SAP; in that case music, sound effects, and background noises won't be heard. This normal-SAP mix would let you hear both sets of audio. We don't know how useful it will be, but it is an option Toshiba didn't overlook. The remaining controls are standard.

One nice touch is the addition of front-panel inputs and outputs. It is nice to have a headphone jack for private listening, but even more useful are the E3 video and audio inputs on the front panel. They let you connect occasionally-used pieces of equipment such as a portable VCR without needing to reach the back of your monitor. For example, a friend could bring over a piece of equipment you don't have and connect it to your equipment with a minimum of trouble. Since there is also an output at the back that you can leave connected to your VCR, you could even make a copy

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Videotests

from the foreign equipment. Similarly, you could use the tuner output at the front to feed a tunerless portable—sans timer, of course. Then there are the extra line-level audio outputs at the back that you could leave permanently connected to your hi-fi system. It is a well-thought-out piece of equipment.

One control could cause confusion if you want to use its more esoteric functions. The MCTS (MTS) switch diagram on the inside of the door is correctly wired according to the instruction manual, but in

the tight space for labeling on the door flap some of the legends are out of order and lines match legends with switch positions. If you're not careful about following the lines, you could end up confusing the switch positions. If this is the biggest human-engineering flaw we could find, it is a good indication of just how well Toshiba did their homework. You'll hardly ever use that control since the one on the remote lets you switch between main and SAP audio, and the monitor switches to mono automatically if the broadcast is in mono.

Performance. In many ways the CZ2084 is an excellent performer, but as usual there are a few areas in which perfectionists would ask more. In terms of normal video performance it offers the full NTSC bandwidth and yields a horizontal resolution of 340-plus lines. From its RGB inputs this Toshiba is rated for 400 lines, equivalent to 80 characters per line (cpl). During this round of our tests we were unable to verify the 400-line/80-cpl spec because we did not have access to an 80-column RGB computer. Our current 80-column color board is designed for RGBI monitors. The I is for intensity, a signal that permits 16 colors instead of the 8 available on RGB inputs. If you're buying this monitor for use with a computer, double check if the "RGB" inputs are compatible. Video signal-to-noise ratio was 51dB. Color was good, but on our sample convergence was somewhat off on the right side of the picture.

Toshiba's audio earns both roses and brickbats. The roses are for the electronics, which have a frequency response of 20 to 20,000 Hertz within 3dB with an audio S/N of 40dB on the video inputs. There is some small leakage of TV audio into those circuits. The brickbats—well, maybe a quarter of a brick—are for the internal speakers. Their frequency range is quite uneven, but what else can you expect from 2 by 3-1/2 inch speakers in almost nonexistent baffles? With decent external speakers audio is very respectable; however, the internal amplifiers supply a maximum of just five watts per channel. Putting larger amplifiers into the same case with a video screen can lead to color distortion.

We have praised the ease of operation as we described the controls and how they work. There is even a fix for the one quibble we could have: while the switch diagram for the audio selector printed on the door is a little confusing, there is another label that's easier to understand within the control cavity. If you get confused by the label on the door, you could peel off the one in the compartment and stick it on the door. Do it carefully or you may rip the label.

Conclusion. The CZ2084 is another of Toshiba's steps forward toward a universal viewscreen. Its audio is versatile and it provides picture signals in either video or RGB form. It could use some help for its internal speakers, and maybe for audio crosstalk between inputs, but it is a useful step on the way to a universal, compact way of viewing today's video with broadcast stereo audio.

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Epson 2-Inch Color Monitor/Receiver



Yup, that funny-looking transistor-radio lookalike in the picture is really a TV with a two-inch screen—and not only that, it's color too. Last

summer Epson made news by showing a miniature TV, the Epson Elf, unlike any other. It did not display its two-inch color picture on a conventional CRT like all previous color TV pictures. It was on a flat-panel display a fraction of an inch thick and virtually transparent.

The display generates no light of its own. Instead a miniature fluorescent light illuminates the picture from behind like a color slide. The technology is not completely new: it is a variation on the popular LCD display used in watches. In 1983 black & white LCD TVs were produced by Casio and Seiko. They worked by reflected light and lacked contrast, but the Elf may be used with either its internal fluorescent light or by ambient light. It has almost as much contrast as tube-type screens and its color makes it more pleasant to view than the earlier black & white LCD TVs, on which the white looked pinkish.

Compactness is not the Elf's only fea-



ture. It also accepts video and audio input to make it a monitor/receiver. It is this capability that makes it most attractive to VIDEO readers. Here at last, following a bevy of bulkier five-inch models, is the color monitor you won't grumble about totting on location. You'll be able to set color to your preference in the field. As we'll discuss under "Performance" later, it is not perfect, but it's the beginning of a practical solution to what has been a problem until now. The remainder of its features are more modest and it can provide many hours of entertainment as a TV set—a color TV you can put in your shirtpocket.

Description. The Elf is a small black box with silver trim that looks like a tran-

sistor radio or portable cassette recorder, but what would be the cassette hatch doesn't look wide enough. It is 3.15 inches high by 6.3 wide by 1.22 deep and weighs 1.1 pounds without batteries (five AA cells). It really does fit in the pocket of a man's dress shirt, but whoever takes care of those shirts will probably take you to task for stuffing your pockets too much.

At the top right of the front panel is a slide dial for continuous tuning, and most of the area below it is taken up by the grille for its built-in speaker. Most of the remainder of the front panel is a clear glass window. Under the window is a black frame with a darker area within its border. Printed on the upper area of the frame is the man-

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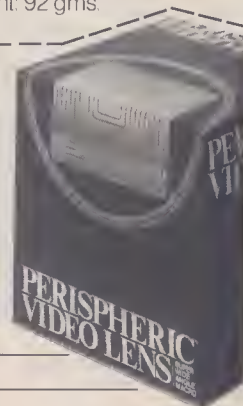
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Videotests

represent 240 lines and above were not distinguishable. The finest resolvable group of lines from a multiburst pattern was 2 megahertz, approximately 160 lines. The resolution in the "Results and Ratings" section therefore quotes resolution in terms of pixels, computer style.

We could not measure the signal-to-noise ratio in the normal way because the information reaches the LCD panel by row and column rather than as a traditional video signal. So we didn't have a standard video signal to measure, except too far

back in the circuitry to make the measurement meaningful. The second significant factor is that on such a small screen with limited detail, the effects of noise are not as noticeable. Instead we give a comparison to a standard 19-inch TV. What's visible is equivalent to a S/N of over 50dB on a 19-inch TV or monitor.

We described in the "Operation" section how tricky it was to adjust the color of the picture. If you put in the time to adjust it correctly, you can achieve good color. However, the color may be greyed out in

shadow areas because the contrast range is more compressed than with tube-type pictures.

Sound is surprisingly good from such a small speaker. It is not as tinny as a cheap transistor radio. It is more like on a standard TV set. With high-quality stereo phones it is even better, but the jack on the set is single-channel—so you must use an adapter if you want sound in both phones. We did not have the supplied earphones for testing.

Despite the effort you must invest to get color and brightness properly adjusted, it is still a pleasure to use the set—partly because it is color and partly because of its size, shape, and portability. We rate ease of operation as average for sets of this type, with continuous tuning, but remember we're sometimes ready to put up with small inconveniences to achieve a reward. This is one of those times.

Conclusion. The Epson Elf ET-10 is expensive at about \$500 but the pleasure it offers because of size, color, and its monitor inputs can make it a justifiable purchase for some. It's fun to use. It would be nice if the screen were bigger and the controls less finicky, yet we recommend it if for no other reason but to pamper yourself. ✓

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Test Report: Epsan Elf

2-Inch Color LCD Manitar/Receiver DATA

Date of test: October 1984

Suggested retail price: \$500 approx.

Weight: 1.1 pounds without batteries

Dimensions: 3.15 x 6.3 x 1.22 inches (h/w/d)

Power requirements: 7.5VDC, 1.9W; from 5 AA cells, AC adapter (supplied), rechargeable NiCad battery pack, or car adapter

Screen size: 2 inches, measured diagonally

Speaker size: 1-3/8 inches

Earphone jack: yes (earphone supplied)

Type of tuning: continuous with VHF/UHF bandswitch

Cable readiness: not really, but it will tune cable channels A to I and A-5 to A-1 which lie between channels 6 and 7 (see text)

Remote control: no

Special features: video and audio input jacks, soft carrying case, handstrap, built-in whip antenna, replaceable fluorescent lamp unit

RESULTS & RATINGS

Picture sharpness: 220 horizontal x 240 vertical pixels

Snowiness, S/N ratio, luminance: equivalent to over 50dB on a standard 19-inch set (see text)

Accuracy of colors: good (see text)

Convergence: not applicable, pixels individually addressed

Adjacent channel rejection: good

Overall picture quality: good/very good, viewing angle critical (see text)

Overall audio performance: average on speaker, good on our headphones, supplied earphone not tested

Ease of operation: average (see text)

Overall performance: good/very good

High Tech


continued from page 70

exotic device that is just too small-potatoes for RCA itself to make and market.

If you ask RCAers about RCA home computer, they roll their eyes heavenward, whistle, and adopt the "who, me?" posture. The monitor/receiver has a port for a computer. Retail establishments are demonstrating Dimensia with the aid of an interfaced computer (most often the Commodore 64) which simply turns on and off the various controls. One person familiar with Dimensia poses a home variation of the retail demo. "You could program it," says our source, "so that every five minutes a video camera in the nursery can flash a picture of the sleeping baby onto the screen." The interface and programming exist. What possibly could be next?

Clearly Dimensia is a different type of video/audio super system. It can drift into other parts of our lives. Some people feel remote control is right for video and wrong for audio. While watching video material, they say, the viewer is sedentary. The chance to express choice without moving one's butt is appropriate. Audio, on the other hand, may be experienced while the listener is actively involved in doing something else—perhaps in a different room.

It seems likely that other manufacturers will be (ahem) inspired by Dimensia. As one RCA spokesman puts it, "Dimensia is more a concept than a technology." Just how useful a concept is it? System or no system, if you want to play a record, you have to toddle over to the turntable and put the desired disc in place. For that matter, if you want to operate a toaster, you still have to drop the bread into the slots.

Systems are intended to produce certain desirable effects. The Ghost of Dimensia Future reveals a home and, in fact, a life governed from a living-room chair. The opportunity to exert control over existing and impending video and audio products is delicious. Putting most of one's life into a home-entertainment system may yield fascinating effects—a touch of convenience and a splash of decadence. Nevertheless, Dimensia is one super system. 

Top Equipment

continued from page 77

but it still offers equivalent picture quality. Where those heads count most is in noise-free special effects—on which the GE portable doesn't compare with the others.

Beta Hi-Fi and Mono

We reviewed only three Beta Hi-Fi models, not because they were inferior to the VHS machines but because this year the VHS models were more newsworthy. Instead we chose very diverse Beta Hi-Fi models because the technology is spread-

ing high audio quality over a wider range. One is a top-of-the-line model from NEC, the VC-739E. It offers excellent picture and sound as you would expect, and even its linear mono track is outstanding. It is the second best Beta Hi-Fi we've tested since the introduction of the subformat. It offers a complete set of features and two sets of audio outputs for convenience, but does not offer a loop-through antenna input with a second optional RF input to make taping off the cable easier. As far as we can recall, that is unique to the Sony SL-2700 we raved about the previous year.

The Hi-Fi feature in Beta is not only for the rich. Sanyo offers its VCR 7200 at \$699.95 suggested retail. We had a little trouble with the one we reviewed—it had an intermittent problem on one audio track. We've seen a number of others that worked flawlessly. The 7200 offers preset tuning and a number of other cost-saving omissions like slow motion, speed play, and video or audio dubbing—but as a VCR with Hi-Fi-grade sound it delivers.

Yes, there are fewer Beta machines than VHS, but this year we reviewed a pitifully low number: two. One was Sanyo's

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VCR4650 table model, which attracted us because of price, and the other was Toshiba's V-X34, the lightest full-size half-inch portable at just 5.5 pounds with battery. The Sanyo has a suggested retail price of only \$420 but still offers wireless remote control. It may be the lowest-priced VCR to offer one. Performance-wise it's only average to fair—but it is easy to use and can bring many years of basic video enjoyment even though it is a barebones unit except for the remote. The Toshiba is another story: size and weight may attract you to the machine, but performance is

what keeps you. It has excellent picture and sounds about as good as the best non-Hi-Fi VCRs.

Camcorders

There is no winner in this category for one obvious reason: you can't compare the systems by Sony, JVC, and Kodak. Each is different and each has its own redeeming features.

In 1984 we reviewed a second-generation Betamovie from Sony, a VHSC with 20-minute compact cassette from JVC, and an 8mm entry by Kodak—plus a Sanyo Be-

tamovie that was identical to the Sony we reviewed last year. More to the point, the Sanyo is identical to the current Sony Betamovie except that it lacks the new autofocus mechanism. All share the same goal: a single unit that records a scene without need for extra equipment. The new Sony BMC-220K AF doesn't have an electronic viewfinder and cannot play back or rewind, but it has a 3 hour and 20 minute capacity plus auto focus. The JVC GR-C1U offers both recording and playback plus compatibility with the VHS format through an adapter—but offers only a 20-minute mini-cassette. Its recorder section seems capable of higher performance than its camera section, but since it is a combined unit, you have no way of squeezing more out of the unit.

The Kodak 8mm introduced the new format, but no other compatible machines are available from other manufacturers, though one should be out from Polaroid by the time you read this. The Kodak model 2400 we tested offers auto focus, but there is a less expensive manual model. Its current capacity is 90 minutes and it can record excellent pictures with its recorder section. But its camera imposes limits. Kodak offers an accessory cradle, a tuner module with a two-program/two-week timer, and a power supply that performs most of the cradle's functions. In short, the 8mm camcorder already has a complete support system from Kodak, and with others joining the format it could become established.

These three incompatible entries may have the makings of a more complex format war. Word also circulates in the industry about a camcorder that takes a full-size VHS cassette, but no details are available yet. This is no time to pick a winner. Let's wait and see what happens.

Cameras (VHS & Beta)

If the weights were equal, Magnavox's camera would be the clear winner here. However, it weighs much more than the runners-up, and that is a considerable handicap when comparing it with its lighter counterparts. (We review Beta and VHS together here because adapters to switch formats are widely available.)

If we rated too few VCRs this year it's because there were so many advancements in cameras. They became smaller, lighter, more flexible, and more complex. As usual they became more sensitive, with some boasting of sensitivities of 7 lux (about 0.7 footcandles) down from 10 lux. A smaller tube was announced with an image surface diagonal of 1/3-inch. And in solid-state sensors there is a new contender based on charge coupled technology, the Charge Coupled Device.

Among the cameras from the VHS camp, those with top marks are the Magnavox 8280, RCA CKC020, and Minolta K-520S AF. The Magnavox makes good pictures, and its features include a keyboard with different buttons for each

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character, three font sizes in four colors, and an eight-page recallable memory. (It is a dead ringer for the JVC GX-N70 reviewed in 1983 except for color—and it should be since JVC makes it for Magnavox.) At 5.8 pounds it is a bit heavy, but has enough bells and whistles to make it a veritable studio-on-your-shoulder.

RCA's CKC020 is a compact MOS solid-state camera that is just 2.2 pounds with its electronic viewfinder. It is a basic point-and-shoot camera with continuous auto white balance and a number of features intended to make it easy to use. However, to achieve simplicity, amenities like a titler are missing. It isn't auto focus, and that we missed. I'd pay a half-pound in weight for that. We had a few quibbles about things we'd like to see on it, like an accessory shoe, greater light sensitivity (its 28 lux is only fair), and the like, but overall I like it, especially its freedom from burn and lag.

The Minolta won a special place in my heart because it is compact, light, auto focus, and feels so comfortable in use. It make good pictures too, but the feature that won me over is its optional remote—a slip-on unit for complete control over transport functions that can be removed and used on the longer 23-foot cord supplied. When you take it off the camera, additional controls become available for zooming and operating the run/pause switch from a distance. With the auto focus to help, the only things you don't have at the remote position is the ability to point the camera at a different part of the scene and to see in the viewfinder. But for seeing you can always wire a monitor or TV to the VCR.

Among the Beta cameras we reviewed the Sony CCD-G5 was our favorite. Like other cameras with solid-state sensors, it is not as good in low light as some tube-type cameras, but it still makes pictures with quite rich color at its rated 28 lux. It is a barebones model with auto white balance and auto fade, but no auto focus. It is another of those cameras that feels like an extension of your hand and eye. The other Beta camera that deserves special mention is Sanyo's VSC800. It looks more like a 35mm camera than a video camera. It boasts auto focus and auto white balance—but no auto fade. Its sensor is an MOS solid-state type. Its size and shape take getting used to, but when you do it can make good pictures down to 30 lux.

Videodisc Players

Two important videodisc players were introduced, but one was abandoned along with its format. RCA introduced its SJT 400 random-access CED player with five memories, on-screen displays, and a host of other features. It was even used in an arcade game. It's a shame to see rapid advancements in the format go to waste, but such is progress.

The other introduction was Pioneer's LD-700 front-loading LaserDisc player. Front loading was only part of the story. At long last the speed control for slow motion

moved to the remote and memory was added, so the player can replay a segment. The front-loading feature means you don't have to leave room to open the lid, and it can join your hi-fi and VCR on a short shelf. It also offers an interface and jack, and products are showing up that let you control it with a home computer like the Apple. Already Pioneer has announced a new model to be available soon which will play Compact Discs, LV discs with digital audio, and the new eight-inch LVs. The format seems to keep growing steadily and its features and performance make it a winner.

TVs & Monitors

There were no clear winners here because there's no way to compare all the different TVs we tested.

As usual we didn't review many view-screens. Among the three monitor/receivers we reviewed were RCA's GKC2056P BTSC stereo receiver (on which we listened to the first official stereo broadcast), GE's 19PM4758K with its new blue tube, and Sony's FD-40A four-inch Watchman. They are in such different configurations that they are not comparable. RCA's entry does have its new Full Spectrum chassis with superb picture quality in addition to the stereo and SAP sound; however, it has already been upstaged by the super deluxe Dimensia system, built around a monitor smart enough to control the remainder of your audio/video system. The GE model is a modestly priced monitor/receiver with enhanced picture quality because of its blue screen. We rated it excellent within its class, but it is not as flexible as some of the other monitor/receivers we have tested. Do not write off GE. It has a number of high-performance systems we didn't review. Sony's Watchman is of interest to video buffs because it makes such a handy way to view the results of your videotaping while on location. It is a pity that it isn't color, and don't forget that you need the special A/V connector cable, supplied, to mate it to standard video and audio connectors.

As for monitors, we reviewed only Proton's 25-inch model during the year. It produces a great picture but it is not being supplied with the RGB inputs we spoke of. Apparently its RF radiation doesn't meet the standards set for computing devices. The only TV we reviewed was Sampo's 19-inch KA1946*. We originally looked at it since it had such a good picture and so modest a pricetag. We still think the picture is great and the price reasonable, but we hardly ever see that brand in New York stores. We hope you have easier access to that set. It's worth it.

Accessories

The most outstanding accessory we tested (but not really "the best") was Xtra Link's control device.

We reviewed only six or so accessories as usual last year, and two are specialized but worth mentioning anyway. The Sansui

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PC-X1 is a PCM decoder that lets you record exceedingly high-quality digital sound on the video tracks of a VCR in lieu of a picture. It is of primary interest to audiophiles, but some video buffs might get interested.

The other specialized unit was the Video Vision VAI-135 interface that lets you control Pioneer LaserVision players with an Apple computer. It is wonderful for education and easily creating your own re-edited version of LV material. If you already have the other requisites, it is an inexpensive add-on to open up the world of LVs—but if you don't have either the player or the computer, it can be an expensive proposition. One note: since the current Sylvania and Magnavox players are made by Pioneer, it might work with those players as well. Check with Video Vision Associates.

Of the remaining four gadgets, the most useful one with the widest appeal is the Xtra Link. It lets you control devices with IR remote controls from other rooms or distances beyond the range of the remote. It literally converts the infrared back to electricity and runs it in a wire (the antenna cable) back to the device being controlled.

The Fosgate Research 101A Tate II Surround Sound Decoder is a device for decoding the surround information from prerecorded tapes and discs. It uses exactly the same logic as that used in moviehouses, so the result in the home can feel like the moviehouse experience. It is a bit pricey but the results are outstanding.

The other two accessories are video processors. One is from Showtime Video Ventures and it is a step up from Showtime's Color Processor. The new version offers a split screen so that you can more accurately judge the processed version with the unprocessed. It offers the same controls for color, tint, fleshtones, and contrast. The other is the Vidicraft Detailer III. It too is an improvement on an earlier product, the Detailer II. The improvements are a split screen to judge the effect of the enhancement, control of the enhancement in the black areas to reduce noise, and a better selection system for handling the input signal. As with the previous version, you have control of enhancement, detail, and VNX (noise reduction).

Top Tapes

continued from page 81

any parents and teachers—no companies, please—who would like to recommend educational tapes to our readers in the letter's column.)

☐ **Most Outrageous: My Breakfast with Blassie** (Rhino). Let's recall this minor entry in August's "Five Tapes That Shook the World" story as a reminder of small-label creativity—and as a memorial to Andy Kaufman. This parody of Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory's *My Dinner*

with Andre must serve as the last statement in the career of the wildest conceptual comic since Ernie Kovacs, though Kaufman was a far cry from Kovacs' civilized whimsy. He and former pro wrestler Fred Blassie settle down for a little chat, and even before the vomit scene it becomes clear that Kaufman's main audience was himself—and if anyone else liked what he did, that was merely icing on the cake. Steeped in anger and alienation, Kaufman's was a brilliant—albeit unhappy—brand of humor. A lonely achievement. Visual quality on VHS is, appropriately, awful. (Honorable Mentions: Sony's *We're All Devo* and MCA/Pacific Arts' *Repo Man*, already cited in other categories; the Residents' *Mole Show/Whatever Happened to Vileness Fats*, for its inimitable blend of weird music with weird video art; and Feline Video Productions' *Catsercise*, reviewed in May 1984's "Channel One"—the tape doesn't exist, but nonetheless drew interested letters and phone calls.)

□ **Most Repeatable:** *Repo Man* (MCA/Pacific Arts). I really like this one! ✓

Top Discs

continued from page 85

monotonous—what can you do with a band and a singer but shoot 'em and record 'em? I am not impressed by turning the camera on its head just to vary the routine (see *Olivia in Concert*—or, rather, don't).

There's also the problem of musical monotony. A concert disc is only as good as one's affection for the artist. So even if *Barry Manilow at the Greek* is well-recorded, there's the problem of Barry Manilow. I cast my lot with Dolly Parton because she's fresh, unaffected, entertaining, talented, trashy, and obviously loves everybody. Her concert disc is sharply rendered, sounds great, and is nicely introduced by a press conference that is fun to watch over and over.

□ **Best Foreign Film:** *Amarcord* (RCA). Warner's years-old cassette version was faded and washed out, and dubbed by people who have never seen Italy. Fellini was said to have supervised it, but so what?—Fellini doesn't speak English. RCA, once more into the breach, went back to an Italian negative, subtitled it (in yellow) expressly for video, and gave us the film we remember. The difference is astounding. But those of you who don't have a CED player will not have a chance to see it: buildings that were shrouded in mist in the Warner tape appear as if by magic on CED. The lovely Italian dialect from Fellini's hometown of Rimini is rendered with charm and variety. And don't forget the sexy Gradisca and how she got her name. See it as it should be seen.

□ **Most Collectible (LV):** *The Making of "Thriller"* (Vestron). The fabulous video, some fascinating interview stuff, and a look at what 1984 ended up being: the year of Michael Jackson. This is the disc

you'll pull out in 20 years to remind yourself where it all began.

□ **Most Collectible (CED):** *Tootsie* (RCA/Columbia). Already an old friend, this hit comedy of 1983 seems even better in 1984—not because of any surprises but because of an almost effortless sweetness and humanity that sidesteps farce to tell the story of a man who had to become someone else to find out what was missing in his own life. Perhaps, on the other hand, 1984 was the year of Dustin Hoffman. ✓

Pies in the Sky

continued from page 94

sion. "Well," says Ed Dooley of the National Cable Television Association, "we're waiting for it to become a competitor."

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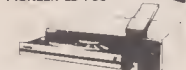


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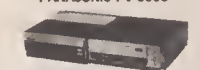
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Falling from the sky like sweet summer rain, DBS requires no wires and gadgetry and no local system operators. It touches no municipal rights of way, thus preventing town councils and other assemblies of civic oafs from demanding expensive public-access facilities and a percentage of the gross. DBS could build a significant power base in underserved areas, estimated to contain somewhere between 5 to 20 million homes. But with each DBS operator's satellites raining programs down on almost the entire country, it's clear that cities are a likely target as well. DBS could make deals with SMATV (Satellite Master Antenna Television) operators in the heart of cable franchises, taking 200- and 300-unit condos away from cable's most profitable areas.

Here, cable takes DBS more seriously than it wants to let on. "Cable operators are making deals for SMATV-type operations right now," says Dooley. "They're not losing the opportunity to wire a building just because the cable doesn't pass it, or because the landlord won't permit entry. It's being done all over the country—it has to be done to prevent SMATV operators and pirates from taking away your business." To say nothing of DBS.

"Cable operators have recognized that DBS is a potential competitor, and they're not going to stick their heads in the sand," Dooley says. And so it becomes clear that the approach proposed by HBO—that of encouraging cable operators to lease dishes in unwired areas—is more than just an attempt to get monthly programming fees out of 600,000 earth-station owners now getting cable and pay services without charge. There is a sincere desire to create a cable-controlled form of DBS that will occupy the market before competitive DBS gets into business. It's more than a desire: "It will become," says Dooley, "an economic necessity as the years tick off. They don't want to have to do that business, but they will. Cable will be in the enviable position of being able to preempt the kind of competition DBS can offer."

So mark it down: Cable isn't taking DBS lightly if it is planning its own SMATV and private-dish deals to score what Dooley calls a "pre-emptive strike" in the marketplace. In addition, DBS will compete with cable for programming and programming services. It may not be able to buy exclusivity, but it will buy the same stuff cable buys. USCI ran *48 Hrs.*, *Sophie's Choice*, *Risky Business*, and *Tootsie* just as cable's pay movie services did. And USCI's sports channel looked so much like ESPN because it *was* ESPN. Other ad-supported services may want to supplement or replace cable with DBS in the future, especially if cable continues in its present slow-growth mode. "You're going to see negative growth with these cable services in the next few years," says USSB's Clare Simpson. "We talk with them all the time, and they all want DBS to work. When we ask

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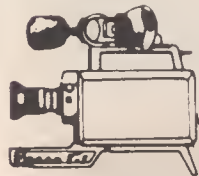
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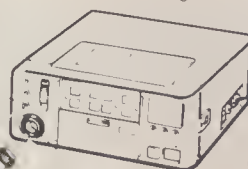
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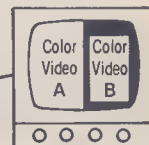
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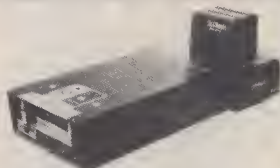
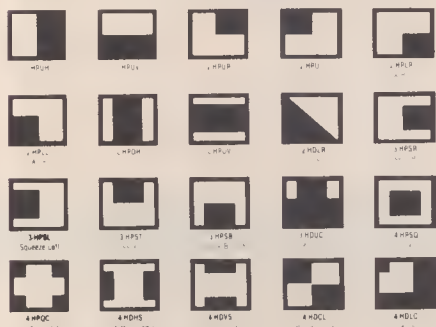
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what they'll say to cable affiliates when they move to DBS, they say, 'Well, look—it's in the best interests of our stockholders to expand our business. We have no choice.'

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But before we kiss off cable as cavalierly as cable once kissed off the networks, it would be well to look at the dark side of this new force. Is there a chance that DBS could become a new constellation—the White Elephant in Space? Yes, there is.

DBS offers few channels: the three operators planning to go on the air between 1986 and 1988 will offer 18 channels among them (possibly 22, if USSB and Dominion get clearance to add two more channels each). All will require the purchase of an earth station. (Standardization will probably enable viewers to look at all three satellites with one motorized dish steered by remote control, but a decoding module will be required for each service a viewer subscribes to.) Most of those channels will be viewable only for a monthly fee. Some of those channels—Dominion's, for instance—may have a relatively small audience, and they account for a disproportionately large portion of the channels that will be available from the first three services to go on the air.

The net result may be that only a dozen channels will have mass-audience appeal—and those few will in all likelihood offer programming identical to that available via cable. STC and USSB will be similar to each other as well as similar to cable. Only Dominion, DBS's version of Burning Bush Broadcasting, will have its own distinct identity.

DBS may run into trouble if the three operators stumble onto the air piecemeal, a year or so apart. USSB says it could move up to 1987 instead of '88. Dominion, first scheduled for '88, now sees '87 as a good possibility according to Karlsson. STC is scheduled for '86 but may hold off a year and join the others. Putting up a DBS system costs 500 to 800 million dollars; it will be safer if all three operators take the plunge at the same time.

That pricetag also puts a premium on getting the support of the investment community. So far DBS is a little weak in that area. Wary of innovation, burned by cable, doubtful of the need for yet another delivery system, Wall Street hasn't been throwing money at DBS—one of the reasons for USCI's collapse.

That attitude may change as more businesses get into satellite communications. Sears Roebuck is going in, aware of the advantages of high-speed satellite transmission of business data. And a company called ADP Comtrend has announced a DBS stock-ticker service. ADP's TrendSetter service is based on a two-foot dish. Early last fall, the company claimed to have installed 300 dishes and said it was continuing to add to its subscriber base at the rate of 50 units a month.

Still, DBS "won't happen until it gets

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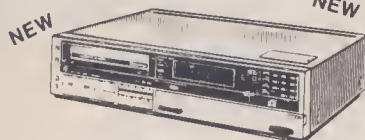
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dramatically less expensive," says John Reidy, a communications analyst with the investment house of Drexel Burnham Lambert. USSB's Simpson says prices will come down. USCI's earth stations cost \$400, which Simpson considers a price of the past. "We have letters from Sony saying that in as short a time as two to four years, the small dishes will be available at retail for less than \$300," he says. "We think that is a high figure. We believe that these dishes will go on the market for less than \$200 in 1986 to '88."

A price that low could make the Buck Rogers appeal of your own earth station very strong. You can pay more than \$200 for a suitcase radio whose sole ability is to deafen people on the street.

Very nice—but what DBS could use right now is a half-price sale on satellites.

Subliminal

continued from page 98

eating habits. She considers the program a good "aid for a serious dieter with a need for long-term goals and help."

Other customers aren't as pleased. "I wasted my money," states James Holmes of Montgomery, Alabama. "I tried the tape for a month and cut down from 2-1/2 packs of cigarettes a day to 15. But then I wanted more cigarettes and started smoking heavily again. I wouldn't recommend the tape because it didn't work."

You Will Read Background

Over the last 20 years or so, subliminal communication has been the center of considerable controversy. One of the earliest uses coming to public light was in 1957, when the messages "buy popcorn" and "drink Coca Cola" were added to a print of the movie *Picnic*, playing at a Fort Lee, New Jersey, theater. Six weeks later popcorn and Coke sales there reportedly grew 58 and 18 percent respectively. Then, during the 1973 Christmas season, the subliminal "get it!" was inserted in a nationwide television toy commercial.

Such practices, deemed dangerous and a threat to privacy because they tamper with the subconscious mind, were sharply denounced. And the Federal Communications Commission, calling subliminals "deceptive and contrary to the public interest," sent a notice to TV stations saying they could not transmit material containing such messages. Nevertheless a few stations continued to broadcast the "get it!" ads for a while; and subliminals designed to heighten fear in moviegoers turned up later in *Psycho* and *The Exorcist*.

Today audio subliminals intended to deter theft are widely used in department stores and supermarkets across the country. The method, which applies a special electronic processor to transmit messages such as "I am honest" or "I will not steal," has been criticized because stores make no public disclosure of its existence. In fact,



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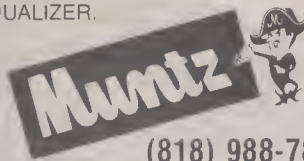


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focusing on anti-shoplifting messaging, a House of Representatives subcommittee held hearings last August to gather information on current uses of subliminal technology. In other action, the American Civil Liberties Union is considering launching a study of subliminal communication in television advertising. While the FCC says there's no indication that subliminal messages are now carried in commercials, many people suspect otherwise.

Subliminal home videocassettes, on the other hand, are a different matter. There's no question of your *unknowingly* being subjected to suggestions. And what's more, all the messages are supplied for you to plainly see either at the start of the tape or on a separate list accompanying it. Still, the question remains: do they work?

Other types of visual subliminal communication have been shown to be effective in facilitating behavioral change, according to leaders in the field. Dr. Lloyd H. Silverman, a research psychologist at the New York Veterans Administration and New York University professor, has written a book, *The Search for Oneness* (International Universities Press, 1982), discussing his experiments with therapeutic subliminal messaging. When it comes to subliminal videocassettes sold to consumers, however, Dr. Silverman points out that "the effectiveness of these tapes must be demonstrated, not assumed. You shouldn't extrapolate from research that only tangentially relates to them and assume they'll have the effect manufacturers hope them to have."

Behavioral scientist Dr. Hal C. Becker of Fort Collins, Colorado—who invented the processor first used to subliminally cut store pilferage, and who performed university studies he says "prove the effectiveness of visual subliminals"—warns that "just because someone is selling a 'subliminal cassette,' that doesn't mean it's going to affect the mind of the viewer." He charges that commercial subliminal video is "becoming a sloppy field that's more art than science. But," he adds, even at that, "the way most folks are doing it, it's not even an art—it's a ripoff."

You Will Read About Tapes

A look at most of the home tapes reveals their conscious-level content to have a pronounced sameness. The majority show water—peaceful views of ocean waves teasing the shore or flowing streams. For example, in the *Money-Prosperity* Randolph tape, produced by Environmental Video of Manhattan Beach, California, you see scene after tedious scene of Southern California coastline as suggestions like "I am very successful" and "I feel like a millionaire" flash subliminally onscreen. Meanwhile, a somewhat different visual approach is taken in *No-Effort Subliminal Weight Loss* from United Entertainment of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Here's a "fantasy video" starring a slightly overweight woman sitting at her vanity and an ideal-weight woman prancing on horseback along the

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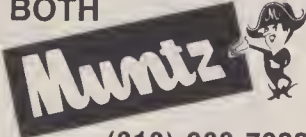
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beach, diving underwater, and frolicking with rabbits. The Hypnovision tapes from Self Improvement Video are perhaps the most interesting to watch because they use slick presentation techniques adapted from TV advertising that mix a variety of tranquil settings with product closeups and other elements.

Companies use various methods to show the change-inducing subliminal video phrases. Some processes permit greater visual intensity and message frequency, which producers say result in better brain absorption. Typically, a superimposed suggestion is flashed onscreen for 1/30th of a second about every 35 seconds. A more sophisticated procedure uses a video processor invented by Dr. Becker that synchronizes an embedded—not superimposed—message with varying bright and dark areas of the picture. “Shadowing” the conscious-level image, these messages are shown for 1/60th of a second 30 times a second.

Videophonic Enterprises of Denver, Colorado used the processor to produce its *Kaleidoscope* stress-management stereo tapes, which supply different visual and aural message tracks for each brain hemisphere. “The right hemisphere,” says Dr. Thomas Budzynski, a Denver psychologist who developed the suggestions, “needs a simply communicated direct message like ‘relax,’ whereas the logical resistance of the left hemisphere calls for a more positive message such as ‘I can relax.’” Another organization, Mind Communications of Grand Rapids, Michigan—which along with Environmental Video, created an audio subliminal-only stress-reduction videotape, plans to bring out a series of cassettes—including one title for gaining “sexual confidence”—using the Becker video processor.

You Will Heed the Shrinks

One question raised by the availability of subliminal self-help tapes is, of course, whether the programs are potentially harmful. Dr. Silverman stresses that “any psychological intervention with the power to change behavior in a positive direction can also change it in a negative direction. And subliminal messages can have unexpected effects on particular people.”

The psychologist therefore urges companies marketing subliminal cassettes to “test out their products in carefully controlled studies [that is, using two groups, one for comparison], the way a legitimate drug company would. This is the only way one would know if the tapes are doing what they are supposed to do and determine the kinds of unexpected reactions that can occur.”

Dr. Abel points out that the home programs could prove detrimental by generating negative feelings if the desired change doesn't occur. “For example,” he says, “if you don't lose weight, you may say to yourself, ‘Gee whiz, I really have a serious problem—this tape didn't work for me. I

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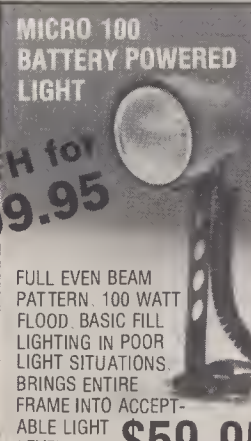
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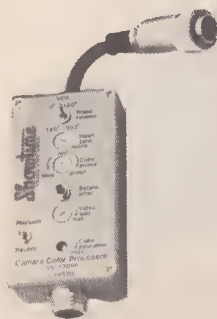
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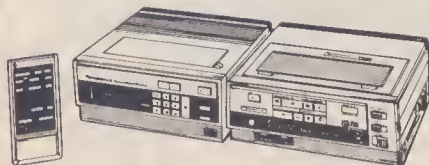
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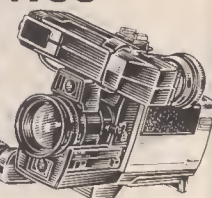
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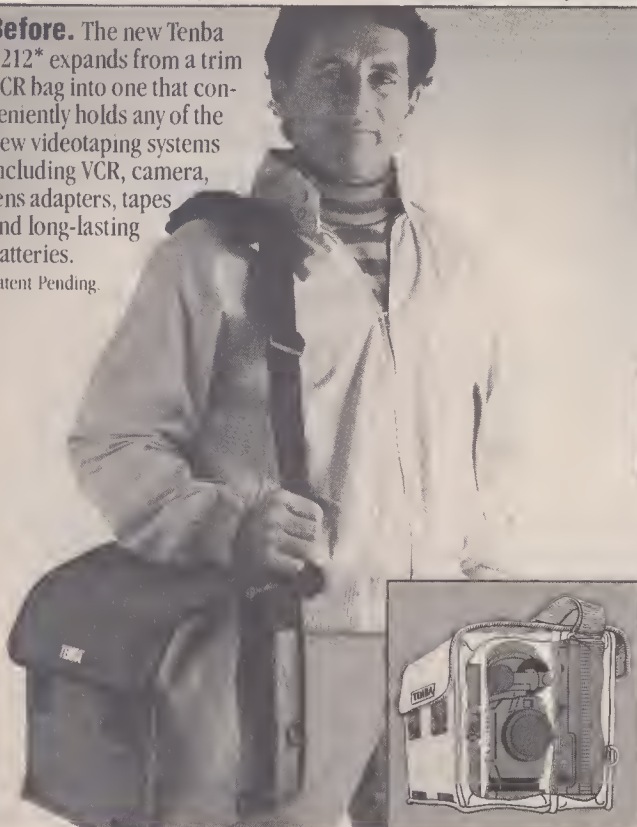
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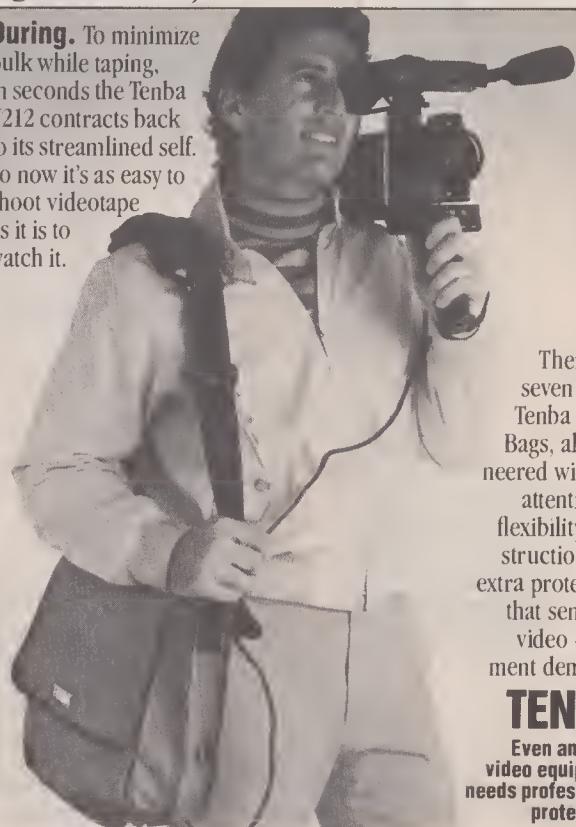
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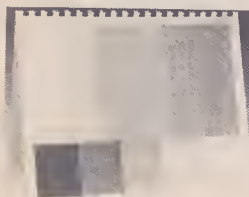
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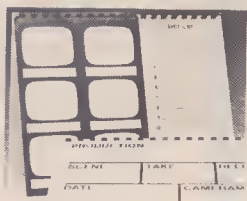
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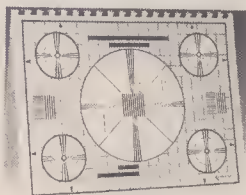
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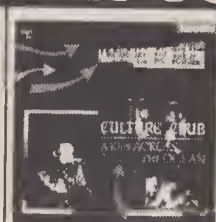
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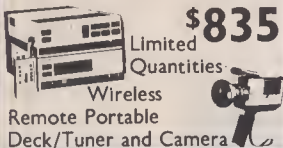
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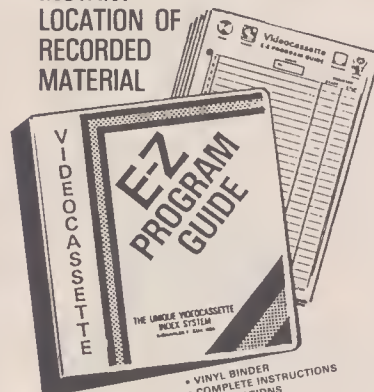
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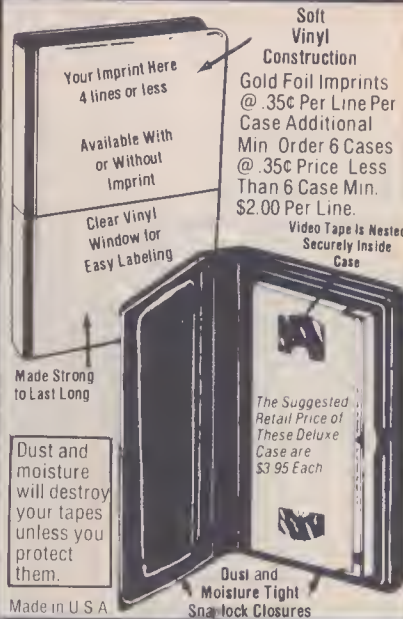


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Dateline Tokyo

Letter from Japan

by **Ichiro Kakehashi**

Shows and Tell

Twice a year, in June and January, salaried workers here can bank on what is inaccurately called a bonus, usually two and a half to three months of wages, which most people have already spent long before they really have it.

Department stores offer buy-now-pay-later plans for bigticket items like cars and appliances and home electronics gear, to be paid for at bonus times. The big one comes in mid-December, in time for the year-end holidays. Here, New Year's is observed most like Christmas in the West, as a family holiday and gift-giving period. It is also a time for all the crass commercialism necessary to separate a wage earner from his bonus.

In a gadget-conscious country like Japan, one of the classic preludes to year-end bonus buying is the Japan Electronics Show, and the All-Japan Audio Fair.

Although it is primarily for the people in the business, the Electronics Show has the last four days set aside for the masses, who throng by the tens of thousands for a free look at what they can expect to see on the market in time for bonus season. The Audio Fair, on the other hand, charges about \$2.50 a head for admission, and is open to all throughout its six-day run.

One of my friends, who's

been waiting for the arrival of 8mm video here, said he was surprised at the Audio Fair organizers, the Audio Society of Japan, because of their insistence that the emphasis remain on audio. My friend sagely points out that anyone who hasn't spent the past five years in a cave knows beyond doubt that audio and video are inseparable. The Audio Society itself acknowledges that the A-V market during 1984 was worth nearly \$17 billion excluding speaker sales! But they insist it is an audio show. Back in October 1982, when Compact Disc players were being introduced, Philips of the Netherlands (which co-developed the equipment with the Sony Corporation) wanted to show how the technology worked for laser video reproduction. The Audio Society relented only after exacting a pledge that Philips would demonstrate the equipment with still, rather than moving, images.

See the CD

The time has finally come for compact digital audio, now that we finally have something to look at, as well as listen to. There were at least 10 different prototypes of CD players interfaced to a monitor TV to show still images. Most of the companies displaying them used the same Sony software, "Rock 'n' Rouge," an album by Seiko Matsuda, an over-promoted young lady who ranks high on the list of teen idols here.

Among the more active exhibitors—the guys who would actually talk about the machines, rather than just display them—were Hitachi Ltd., the Victor Company of

Japan, Trio-Kenwood, Toshiba, and Japan Marantz. The equipment has in common the ability to read six of eight unused data bits on a Compact Disc that have been dedicated to data for about 2000 16-color frames on a disk. A Toshiba representative said that his company would be ready to make the necessary chips as soon as the standards are formally approved. It looks like the A-V players will be available here by cherry blossom time. What we'd really like to see is a palmable CD player that can handle the video data, contained within the same kind of package Sony uses for the D-5, which has a suggested retail price of \$299.95 in the States and was supposed to be ready in time for Christmas.

Rating Wars

The new TV season is not characterized by nearly as many programming changes here as in the United States. There are some adjustments, but most are variations on the tried and true (or tired and true) formula of music-variety shows, quiz and game shows, home dramas, and samurai slice-'em-ups. But we *do* get a fresh infusion of really interesting material during the month the seven channels we receive in Tokyo conduct their ratings samplings. My neighbors and I had our VCRs working in relays for a marathon of tape-swapping. We caught, among other screen gems, *Superman II*, *Raise the Titanic*, and *The Road Warrior* (promoted here as *Mad Max II*).

Fuji First

Unless one of the big guns like Matsushita Electric Industrial Company or Toshiba

moves sooner, it appears that the first 8mm video camera-recorder we'll see in Japan is the Fuji-8, from the Fuji Photo Film Company, in March or April, and priced around \$1225.

The Sony-built camera uses a charge-coupled device (CCD) image pickup that incorporates 250,000 picture elements, a resolution comparable to the sensing capacity of a two-thirds-inch video image pickup tube. The image passes through a Fuji-designed six-power auto zoom lens and is rated for shooting in lighting around 20 lux. The prototype is a neat package with a pistol grip that holds the battery pack. Most of the companies that make 8mm video already offered in the United States have held off selling it.

Switch Hitter

The Beta Group got a nasty pre-holiday surprise with the announcement that Toshiba, third-largest in sales among the Beta VCR makers, would put two VHS-format machines on the market. Toshiba said the decision to offer both formats reflects domestic market realities. Of the 7.2 million Betas sold in the fiscal year that ended last March, Toshiba sold a little more than 1.4 million. That's not enough, the front office said. Since last April, Toshiba has been making about 10,000 VHS video recorders a month from kits, at an affiliated plant in Britain. Officials insist that there are no plans to market the VHS machines in the United States—but there aren't many people betting on that pledge to stand. 

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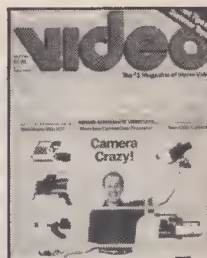
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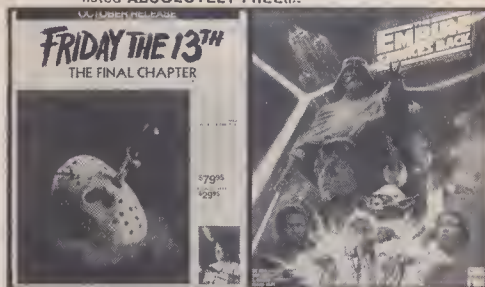


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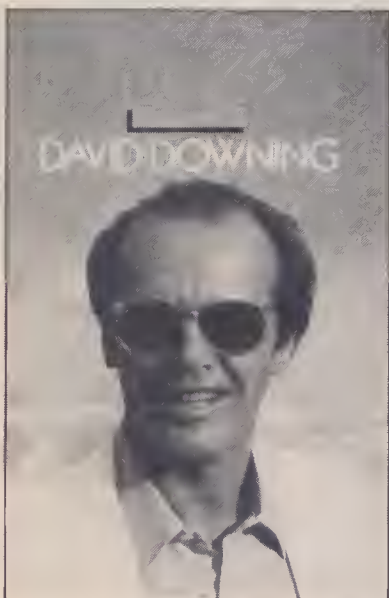
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Video Bookshelf

by George L. George



Talking with Ingmar Bergman

G. William Jones, editor

In candid exchanges at a student seminar, the Swedish

director offers rare insights into his cinematic concepts and techniques, stressing the struggle of a creative craftsman to come to terms with life and himself through his art. (*Southern Methodist U. Press, Dallas, Tex.*; \$12.50.)

Jack Nicholson

by David Downing

A prominent Hollywood star, Nicholson has taken more risks than most in his career and his life. Twice an Oscar winner, his unconventional ways, free-wheeling sexual mores,

outspoken politics, and many offbeat roles are vividly traced in this unauthorized biography. (*Stein & Day, New York*; \$14.95.)

Sublime Marlene

by Thierry de Navacelle

Drawing on the extensive Kobal Collection, this album's fascinating photographs of the indestructible actress—now 83 and living in Paris—sum up her singular life and career. An informative biographical text underlines

Dietrich's consistent humanness and essential femininity. (*St. Martin's, New York*; \$14.95.)

Backus Strikes Back

by Jim & Henny Backus

In this moving and funny memoir, the creator of the nearsighted Mr. Magoo character, with his wife, writes about his stubborn fight against the dreaded Parkinson's Disease, and the eventual resumption of his career. (*Stein & Day, New York*; \$14.95.)

Come Together

by Jan Wiener

A welcome relief from recent books peddling sordid details of John Lennon's private life, this volume focuses on his commitment to peace and his idealistic political activities. Based on formerly secret FBI files, it depicts this less-publicised side of the superstar's complex personality. (*Random House, New York*, \$19.95.)

Video Camera Techniques

by Gerald Millerson

Millerson's handy manual provides reliable data on video cameras' characteristics and uses. Whether operated in the studio, on location, or

in conjunction with a VCR, their potential is discussed here with competence and clarity. (*Focal Press, Stoneham, Mass.*; \$13.95.)

What A Bunch of Characters!

by Tom Scott Cadden

Who played whom in what movie is the question answered in this fun quiz book. Over 2600 roles performed by 50 top stars are listed, together with facts and trivia of the type movie buffs devour. (*Prentice-Hall, Englewood, Cliffs, N.J.*; \$9.95.)

More Character People

by McClure, Twomey, and Jones

Hundreds of actors and actresses regularly cast in supporting roles are honored with portraits and biographical sketches in this engaging survey. It pays tribute to the atmosphere of credibility their presence lends to films, and their popularity with their loyal fans. (*Citadel Press, Secaucus, N.J.*; \$19.95.)

Past Imperfect

by Joan Collins

In this sizzling autobiography sexy Collins reveals all you may want to know, and even more, of what it takes to reach stardom in TV's *Dynasty*—after appearing in *The Bitch*, *Stud*, and other definitely R-rated pictures. (*Doubleday, New York*; \$15.95.)



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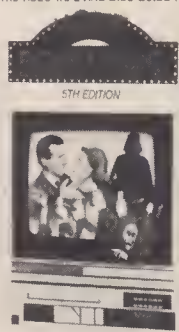
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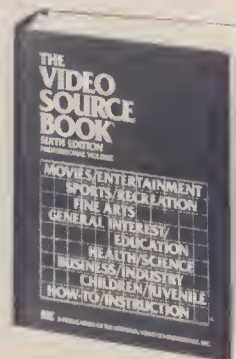


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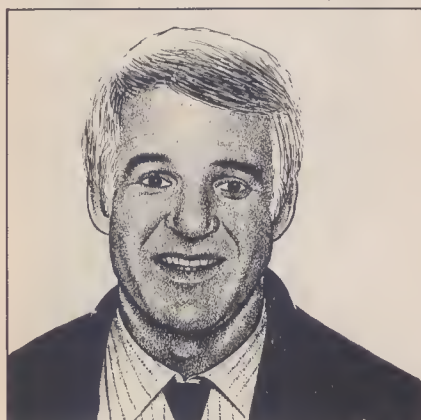
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People

Idol Chatter

by **Lorenzo Carcaterra**



Looks like *The Jerk* has himself another hit. **Steve Martin**, who for the past three years has been in a video coma, seems certain that his *All of Me* feature costarring **Lily Tomlin** will be a smash when it hits video racks this month. "If it isn't," the one-time wild and crazy guy turned actor told VIDEO, "I'll have my confidence gland removed."

Kate Capshaw, whom we all know and love as Indiana Jones' screaming sidekick in his quest to free the captives of the *Temple of*

Doom, is really quite an actress (though you wouldn't notice it in that movie). In *Windy City*, a Toronto Film Festival prizewinner available on video this month, she does much more than shriek and get lowered into a hot pit. "I act. I play a human being with human emotions," she says. "I did not become an actress to blow out my lungs." Capshaw can be seen on two other videos still available: *Dreamscape* (good part, bad movie), *A Little Sex* (good movie, small part). Neither will stun you, but *Windy City*, a small-budget version of *The Big Chill*, will surprise you and is expected to surprise video outlets with strong word-of-mouth sales.

Lou Grant Fights Stress! Back in his *Mary Tyler Moore* days **Ed Asner** was overweight, nervous, and close to a breakdown. Doctors warned him, put him on an exercise and diet program, and Lou turned into a slim

though still not very good-looking man. Now Asner is sharing his health secrets with the video world with *Less Stress in Five Easy Steps* (Video Associates). His motto, expressed in Asner/Grant's usual gruff manner, is "if it helped me, it'll help you." We'll see.

Frederick Forsyth is a bestselling action/adventure novelist who has had two of his books turned into feature films and later videos. His wife Carrie is in the video business in London. Guess which films she makes sure are always in stock and selling nicely? You got it. Both of Forsyth's books-turned-movies, *The Day of the Jackal* and *The Dogs of War*, are doing terrific business. She still can't make the Brits buy more of Freddie's videos than those of Clint Eastwood, but as Eastwood himself told VIDEO, "Who can? But there's enough room over there for both of us. *Sudden Impact* and *The Dogs of War* sound like a nice double feature to me."

Move over, Al. First there was **Mel Brooks** and his *Hitler Rap* video. Now **Dom DeLuise**, who loves money as much as he loves food, is getting in on the dictator rap act. He is producing and starring in what he calls "a nutty musical based on Mussolini's life." *Benito*, which will costar **Madeline Kahn**, will be first released as a feature with a quick video followup. Included in the plans is a five-minute video musical called *And the Trains Will Run on Time*.

Look for **Tod Browning's** (the man who gave us *Freks*) 1927 bizarre classic *The Unknown* to end up in video stores sometime this month. The silent movie

stars the great **Lon Chaney** as a man who has both arms amputated because his lover, **Joan Crawford** (who else?), can't bear the embrace of a man. Luckily he finds a job in a carnival hurling knives at willing victims with his feet. See this one with someone who doesn't much object to your arms around her.

Poe's Cottage is a feature film about a pair of college students and a New York City detective set to track down a maniac who thinks he's **Edgar Allan Poe**. It sounds like fun and should be in video stores late this month or early next. But if you really want fun and you want it with a dash of Edgar Allan, **Vincent Price** suggests you go back and buy the real McCoy. "*The Raven* is a wonderful movie," Price told VIDEO, "full of laughs and an occasional chill. So was *Murder in the Rue Morgue*. You can't find that combination today, no matter how hard you search."

Tanya Roberts, *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle* herself, is one busy young lady. While watching her first starring movie slowly becoming a video camp classic, Tanya is finishing up chores as James Bond's—all right, **Roger Moore's**—latest sexual conquest in *A View to a Kill*. That film should be another video hit for Tanya when it goes that way the end of the year. In the meantime, she's dropped her clothes once again for *Playboy* and will be showcased in that magazine sometime this summer. "Why shouldn't I pose naked?" she says shyly. "I have one of the best bodies in town." She didn't say which town.

Drew Friedman

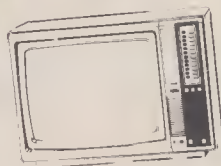
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Off the Air

The Last Word

Ca-Bull

by Bob Brewin

Flown on a TWA prop-powered Lockheed Constellation lately? Of course not. Once Pan Am introduced Boeing 707 jets, all the other airlines followed—damn the cost.

But if the folks who earn their keep lobbying for the National Cable Television Association (NCTA) had been around when the airline business went jet, Lockheed still might be building Connies. That's the only conclusion I can come up with after watching the twists and turns of the latest insane NCTA lobbying effort: broadcast TV is going stereo, just as Pan Am went jet, but the NCTA and its member cable companies are asking the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for permission to stay in the mono age.

Huh? Sounds silly, until you take a look at this situation against Brewin's First Rule of Cable TV: cable companies, like banks, exist to collect money, not to spend it. (There's a historical basis to this axiom. Remember that cable TV got its start by stealing someone else's product, over-the-air TV signals, and then reselling it to subscribers.) The cable operators argue that stereo TV would cost them too much money to upgrade their plant to retransmit the broadcasters' stereo signals to subscribers. The NCTA puts the

expense at a grand total of \$700 million. Time Inc.'s American Television Communications subsidiary estimated its share of this bill alone at \$170 million.

Some major cable companies argued that they might not have the technology down right to carry stereo-TV signals (this from an industry whose hype a few years back had us all convinced we could do anything but reproduce the species via the wonders of two-way cable TV!). In its filing with the FCC, Group W—the third-largest multiple systems operator in the country (and a subsidiary of Westinghouse Electric, whose business-magazine ads are filled with glowing descriptions of its technological expertise)—took a techno-copout. "Sufficient data has not been accumulated to allow conclusions to be drawn on the technical questions of how best to broadcast a stereo signal or the manner in which cable systems may best carry a stereo signal...." This goblydegook comes from a company that also builds nuclear reactors and radar systems.

What this all means is that the poor cable subscriber who took out a second mortgage to pay his always-increasing cable bill is going to end up with lower-quality TV sound (in the near future, at least) than his next-door neighbor who still snatches the broadcast signal out of the air. The cable companies also have a good idea who will pay for the system upgrading once they get around to figuring out the well-nigh impossible task of transmitting a stereo signal: the poor subscriber.

This leads to Brewin's Second Rule of Cable TV: never provide service if you're a natural monopoly. Let "greed and arrogance" be your motto. This worked for cable TV for years. The subscriber, after all, couldn't disconnect and do business with a friendlier cable company—so why bother with service? This has made most cable companies into outfits that string wire and then turn into collection agencies.

This subscriber-be-damned attitude has reached its zenith—where else?—in New York City, where the two cable companies serving (and I use that word loosely) Manhattan seem to be in a contest to see how many subscribers or potential customers they can drive to the shrink in a given day. Manhattan Cable, a subsidiary of Time Inc., failed to wire large portions of its territory, including Soho. To get around spending the money to wire one of the glitziest communities in the world (where people begged to get wired), Manhattan Cable invokes the "Certificate of Occupancy" rule. Soho had been filled with manufacturing lofts which were turning into living spaces. To get around serving these homes, Manhattan Cable asks for proof of a "C of O" because that means you are a residential customer, which by law the company is required to serve. Since getting a C of O for a converted loft is about as fast a process as emigrating from Russia, this gains Manhattan Cable a lot of time. It also irritates customers.

Manhattan Cable isn't the only cable outfit that disdains its customers. My mother lives on Cape Cod and subscribes to Cape Cod Cablevision, owned by TCI, a big and supposedly smart outfit. A few years back this big and smart outfit yanked C-SPAN from my mother's basic service and replaced it with MTV. What's wrong with that? MTV is hot and C-SPAN isn't. It's TCI's right to program its channels anyway it wants. Fine. What TCI forgot to check out is that next to Dade County, Florida, Barnstable County (the cape) is the largest recipient of Social Security checks in the country. The Irish golden-agers who moved to the Cape for retirement don't make great MTV fans.

Recently a bunch of cable systems serving Oklahoma took ESPN off basic and substituted Sports Time. Why? Greed again. The cable company owned a piece of Sports Time and wanted to maximize its profits—but instead ended up irritating the customers. It compounded this error by not giving any advance notice and made the switch midway through the Davis Cup tennis matches.

Though I opposed it, I'm glad we now have federal deregulation of the cable industry. From now on it will become obvious that the economic misfortunes of the cable business are due not to government regulation but to the stupidity, greed, and arrogance of the industry itself.

If you have any cable outrages of your own, send them to me under the heading Cable Outrages, Video Magazine, 460 W. 34th Street, N.Y.C. 10001.

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